

BIBLE STORIES *from the* OLD TESTA- MENT

BY DELLA THOMPSON LUTES





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**BIBLE STORIES FROM
THE OLD TESTAMENT**



BIBLE STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

RETOLD FOR CHILDREN

By
Della Thompson Lutes

ILLUSTRATED



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no. 1

*To my dear sons, Robert, yet, thank God, of earth;
and Ralph, gone on; to Victoria, friend of both; and to all
their friends, which, I hope, means a very great number of
boys and girls in many lands, this book is most lovingly
inscribed.*

TO THE MOTHER

IN preparing this book of Bible stories the writer has had but one purpose above all others, to present to the childish mind the old Biblical tales without the sense of injustice and cruelty which were unfortunately impressed upon her own mind in the days when she pored over the family Bible, studying the pictures of Adam and Eve being driven out of Eden, of Cain being chastised by God, of the flood, of Abraham ready to plunge the knife into Isaac's innocent body, and spelling out a sentence here and there which, to her untaught, unguided mind, seemed to speak only of God's anger, God's vengeance, God's wrath, God's jealousy.

It took years of suffering, years of bitter experience to teach that unguided mind to understand what Jesus Christ came into the world to teach, the love of God, the unfailing justice of His commands.

Bible Stories from the Old Testament

People often misguidedly think that if a child is amusing himself in looking at the Bible and Bible pictures he is well employed and is involuntarily sucking in wisdom and religion from its uninterpreted pages. No greater mistake can be made. Until the child has been first taught the love of God as revealed through the life and teachings of Jesus, and until the Old Bible stories are flooded with this light by the interpretation of either mother or teacher, he can not help but get a warped impression of the God of the Old Testament.

I have talked with many others who, through lack of teaching or through false teaching, have suffered the same calamity. God was an unjust God to drown all the animals and little children and everybody just because the people were wicked! God was a cruel God to demand that Abraham offer up his little son, even if He did put a ram there at the last minute! It was cruel to make Abraham and Isaac suffer so when Abraham was such a good man and Isaac was only

To the Mother

an innocent little boy! Why should God accept Abel's gift and refuse Cain's without giving any reason and so on and so on. We were not taught the *lesson* behind the story.

In this book of stories we have tried to show that God is always loving, never unjust, and that the people of the olden time tried dutifully to follow Him, even though they often thought of Him as a jealous God, exacting, cruel, whimsical. We have tried to bring the little child near to God, to awaken in him a sense of closeness and kinship with God as a loving Father.

We have attempted no theological interpretation of the stories and we leave it to the reader to decide according to his will whether they be mythical, legendary or inspired. We have simply retold them in as nearly as possible the Bible words, following the text wherever possible in order to familiarize the child with passages that, when later he comes to read them from the Bible itself, he will meet as familiar friends of his childhood.

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Bible Stories From the Old Testament

HOW BIBLE STORIES CAME

LONG, many years ago, even before "Once Upon a Time," there were little children on earth just as there are now and they used to ask their fathers and mothers to tell them stories just as you do. There were no books or magazines or newspapers in those days and no way of keeping a record of what stories these people told their children except as they were told from one generation to another and sometimes written down on parchment which was made from the skins of beasts. Then these parchment stories were rolled and carefully preserved and given to their children and their children's children, and read and re-read, told and re-told, written

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

and re-written, and finally printed. That is how we come to know them. These stories were so beautiful and told so many wonderful and beautiful things about God, that we have preserved them in a book called the Bible.

WHERE THE STORIES HAPPENED

IF you will open the big atlas and look at the map of Asia you will find a large sea called the Mediterranean sea, and lying along its shores a little country called Palestine. This country was once occupied by a people called the Hebrews who believed that God loved them better than He did any other people, and so they called themselves the "Chosen of God."

You know all this happened many, many years before Jesus came upon earth to teach people that God is a loving Father who cares for all His people alike; these people, therefore, feared God almost as much as they loved Him and obeyed Him sometimes because they were afraid He would punish them rather than because they knew that what He wanted them to do was for their own good and because He loved them.

They always listened for the voice of God, however, and there were men amongst them who were

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

called prophets, to whom the people believed that God spoke directly.

These prophets lived much alone by themselves amongst the mountains and fields and stars so that they could be silent and hear the voice of God in their hearts. And what they heard they repeated to the people who accepted it as God's law, and wrote it on parchment.

HOW THE WORLD WAS MADE

Genesis II

THERE were a great many stories told by the first peoples of how the earth was made, and many of them you will read when you are older and study about the different nations of the earth.

This is the story the Hebrew people told each other and their children of how the earth was made.

“In the beginning,” they said, “God made the heavens and the earth and at first it was all dark. There was no morning and no evening, no sunlight and no starlight, just dark—all dark. Then God said ‘Let there be Light,’ and there was light. And God called the Light Day, and the darkness He called Night.” And on another beautiful day God made two great lights in the sky, the sun to shed its warmth and light by day and the moon to give a white soft light by night. And he made

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

all the stars that are in the sky, and God set them in the heavens to give light upon earth.

Then He drew the waters all together in one place and called them seas and the dry land He called earth.

When all the earth was finished God rested on one day and this day we call the Seventh day, or day of rest, and that is why all the shops and stores are closed on this day. On this day man can rest from his labors as God did and look about over the beautiful earth and go to church to hear about God and worship Him.

During all this time when God was making the earth He had not yet made it rain. There were also no men or women or little children to till the ground and make the trees and grass and all the things that come from seeds to grow.

But finally God made a mist—you know what a mist is, almost a fine, soft rain, such as you feel in your face sometimes in the early morning—to rise up from the earth and water the whole face of the ground; then the seeds that were in the earth sprouted and grew, and there were plants

How the World Was Made

and flowers and trees upon the earth and there was green grass also. For God loved the world that He was making and wanted it to be beautiful.

Then, say the old Hebrew stories, God took some of the dust of the ground and formed a man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man become a living soul.

THE FIRST PEOPLE

Genesis II

THIS first man of whom the Hebrew stories tell was called Adam. When God had made Adam He put him to live in a beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden, where God, Himself, came to walk in the cool of the day. This was a most wonderful place, this Garden of Eden, for there were blue, running rivers to water it. Beautiful trees and fruits grew there. Every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food was in the Garden.

God told Adam that he might eat of every tree in the garden except one. Of that one, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, God told Adam he must not eat, for if he did he would surely be punished.

Then God made all the beasts of the field and fowls of the air and brought them to Adam and

The First People

let him name them whatever he liked. When He had done all these things for Adam, still God was not satisfied and He said: "It is not good that man should be alone. I will make an helpmeet for him." Which means that although Adam had a most beautiful garden in which to live and all kinds of birds and beasts and fowls about him he had no one to be a real companion to him, no one with whom to talk about all these wonderful things which God had done. So, the stories say, God made Adam to fall into a deep sleep and from one of his ribs he made a woman to be Adam's companion; and Adam called this woman Eve and he loved her more than words can tell. He said: "She is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," which means that because they loved each other and were to live together they belonged to one another and were the same as one. And they were happy in this Garden of Eden which was the very first home and where God came to walk in the cool of the evenings.

THE GREAT DISOBEDIENCE

Genesis III

YOU all know what it is to be disobedient and how especially dreadful it is to be disobedient to those who have been good to you and who have done ever so many kind things for you; and so you will understand how very, very sad a thing this first Great Disobedience was, of which the Hebrew stories tell.

You remember there were many beautiful trees of fruit growing in the Garden of Eden and only one of them God had forbidden Adam and Eve to touch, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

You would think after all God had done for these two children of His in giving them this beautiful Garden to live in, that they might have obeyed Him in this one thing, but they were like a great many other children. They disobeyed

The Great Disobedience

their Father, God. And this was the way it happened as the Bible tells.

One day Eve was walking in the Garden enjoying the flowers and the fruit. In the middle of the Garden she came to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Perhaps she had many times wondered why God had forbidden them to taste of the fruit of this tree, and perhaps, as other children look at and wonder about the things they are forbidden to touch, she had looked at it and wondered what it tasted like because it looked good. On this particular day while she stood there looking at the tree a serpent came to her and asked her if it was true that God had told her they might not eat of every tree in the Garden.

Eve answered him, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the Garden, but of this tree which is in the middle of the Garden God hath told us we shall not eat, neither shall we touch it, lest we die."

Then the serpent told her that this was not true, and that they would not die if they ate of the

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

fruit, but that they would know more than they ever had known before. Eve listened to the serpent instead of to the voice of God and she tasted of the fruit and gave some to Adam and he ate it too.

Do you remember that I told you that God came to walk in this Garden of Eden in the cool of the day, perhaps to talk with Adam and Eve and spend the sunset and evening hour with them as we like to do with those we love?

Well, in a short time after Adam and Eve had tasted of the forbidden fruit, the day began to grow cool and sweet and evening came and they heard God coming to walk in the Garden.

Before this they must have been very happy when they heard God coming and would run forward to meet him as you do your father when he comes home "in the cool of the evening." But this day, because they had eaten of the fruit which God had forbidden them they were afraid and ran and hid themselves amongst the trees of the Garden. Perhaps they thought they could hide from God, or that He would not know what

The Great Disobedience

they did, but no one can ever hide from God, for God always knows what His children are doing and He knew that Adam and Eve had disobeyed Him.

So God called to Adam, and said, "Adam, where art thou?" Then Adam and Eve came trembling before Him and Adam said, "I heard thy voice in the Garden and I was afraid and I hid myself."

I used to wonder when I was a little girl if God felt very sad and sorry in His heart because Adam and Eve had disobeyed Him, as my father did when I disobeyed. Of course there was no reason why Adam and Eve should be afraid of their Father who had done so much for them except that they had done wrong, and we can imagine how very miserable and sorry they must have felt as they stood there before God trembling and afraid. It is a dreadful thing to be afraid because one has done wrong.

God asked them if they had eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree and Adam said, "Eve gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat."

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Then God said to Eve, "What is it that thou hast done?"

And Eve said, "The serpent tempted me and I did eat."

Then first of all, God put a curse upon the serpent. He told him that he should always crawl flat upon the ground because he had told Eve that God's word was not true. And then He talked to Adam and Eve and said to them that He should punish them just as He had told them He should do, and that they could no longer live in the beautiful Garden of Eden because they had disobeyed. God wanted them to learn by grief and trouble to be good. So they went sorrowfully out of the beautiful place where they had been so happy, and God set an angel with a flaming sword to watch over the Garden. The story of this angel is to show us that we can never go back and undo the things we have done.

But God was sorry for poor, disobedient Adam and Eve, just as He is always sorry for His children when they do wrong, and He showed them how to make clothes of the skins of beasts to

The Great Disobedience

keep them warm and how to till the ground so that the seeds that were in it would grow, because you see God wanted to give them another chance to be good and useful people and to help Him in His work for the world. But because Adam and Eve had disobeyed God they had separated themselves from Him and could no longer be His companions in His Garden.

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis IV: 1-16

A DAM and Eve had two sons whose names were Cain and Abel. Cain was a farmer, or as the Bible says, "A tiller of the soil," and Abel was a shepherd and tended flocks of sheep where they fed upon the hillside. Cain was the older of the two brothers and I suppose had helped take care of his younger brother.

Cain and Abel wanted to make gifts to God because people always want to make gifts to those they love and to those who have been good to them. Most of all do we like to make gifts to God who has done so much for us. The best kind of gift for any one to make is something that is very dear to the giver or something he has done himself, so Abel gave one of his little lambs and Cain gave of the fruit of the ground to be an offering to God.

Cain and Abel

Now when the two brothers came with their gifts God was much pleased with Abel because Abel had been good and had done things to please God, and brought his gift gladly. But Cain had been disobedient and he brought his gift more because he was afraid of God than because he loved Him. God was not pleased with Cain and told him so, and Cain was angry and his face grew dark and sullen. Then God said, "Why art thou angry? And why is thy countenance fallen?" And He spoke tenderly and sorrowfully and told Cain that if he did right that He, God, would love him and accept his gifts. God said, "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at thy door;" meaning that if Cain was not sorry for all the wicked and bad things he had done, and if he would not say that he would do better, that sin, "like a baby lion," would lie outside the door of his heart ready to spring up at any time and make him do wicked things, and that "if Cain chose he could tame the young lion before it grew big and strong, and teach it to obey him, but if he did not do so at once, the lion would soon grow

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strong enough to spring upon him and destroy him.”*

But Cain did not pay very much attention to what God said to him. He was still angry and sullen and jealous because Abel was better than he was, and a little later when he and Abel went to the fields together, they talked—quarrelled perhaps, and Cain killed Abel, his brother.

Then God spoke to Cain and said (and now His voice was very stern), “Where is thy brother Abel?” And Cain, still sullen and angry, said, “I know not. Am I my brother’s keeper?”

He could not deceive God, however, who sees all things, and God was bitterly sorry. He told Cain that because he had done this dreadful thing he must go away into a distant land, away from his home and his people and never return. “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground,” said God. “And now thou must leave thy home, and thy mother and father, and go into strange lands. All thy life thou shalt be

*From “Telling Bible Stories,” by Louise Seymour Houghton.

Cain and Abel

a wanderer, hiding and fleeing over the face of the earth.”

Cain, like most disobedient and bad people, was terribly frightened. “My punishment is greater than I can bear,” he said, and he told God that he was afraid some one would kill him as he had killed his brother Abel.

But God, whose heart is always loving and forgiving toward all His children, no matter how bad and wicked they have been, and who is always trying to bring His children to Him and to believe in Him, told Cain that He would watch over and not let any one slay him. And he gave Cain a sign by which he would remember that God had not forgotten him, for He hoped that in another land Cain would repent of his sins and try to be a good and useful man. So Cain went away into a distant land and lived there all his life.

THE MAN WHO WALKED WITH GOD

A DAM and Eve had another son after Abel's death and they called him Seth. After a great many years there was a man named Enoch who was one of Seth's children's children. Enoch was a good man, so good that the Bible beautifully says, "he walked with God." That is a most lovely way of saying that Enoch followed God's teachings and walked so closely to the way God pointed out that he "walked with God." And the story says that when Enoch was through with life on earth "God took him," and the lesson in the story is that if people walk closely in the way of God's teaching they do not have to think of anything that might frighten or worry them for God will take care of them always.

"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him."

THE STORY OF NOAH'S ARK

Genesis VI: VII: VIII

I AM sure you will like this story very much for you all know what a Noah's ark is. It is one of the toys that all children love best.

In these long ago, far off days after there came to be a great many people on the earth, the Bible tells us that the people became so wicked that they did not obey God at all nor listen for His voice.

The whole earth became so wicked, the stories say, that God thought best to send a great flood and wash it clean of its wickedness, because if something didn't happen to prevent it the people would keep on growing more and more wicked until not one would be left who would know God's voice or remember His love. All this, the Bible says, made God very sorrowful. It "grieved Him to the heart," just as it always must make a

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

father sorrowful when his children disobey him.

There was one man who still tried to hear the voice of God and to do as God told him and to obey Him in all things. His name was Noah and he was six hundred years old when the flood came.

Noah had been telling the people for more than a hundred years how wicked they were and trying to make them give up their wickedness and be good. God knew that Noah was trying to help Him in this way and that the people would not heed him, so He chose Noah to help Him in another way.

He told Noah to build an ark or great boat that was half house, large enough for him and his family and a great many animals to live in for a long time.

Of course it would take a long, long while to build such an ark, for it must be very large. God told Noah to build it three stories high with many different rooms in it. There should be a door at the side and a window high at the top. And God told Noah to cover it outside and in with pitch so the water could not get in.



The Story of Noah's Ark

You can see how thoroughly Noah trusted God and obeyed Him, for he must have been many days building this ark, days when the sun shone brightly and there was no thought of rain. But God had told him what to do and he obeyed without question.

When the ark was all finished and ready, God told Noah to take his wife and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth with their wives, and two of every kind of animal, bird and fish and fowl, even the creeping things, and put them into the ark with food enough to last them for many days.

You can imagine what a wonderful procession that would be like, can you not? We do not know what kind of animals there were in those days, but there were two elephants perhaps, marching side by side, two camels, two giraffes, two hippopotamuses and two of every kind of beast and bird, all marching into this wonderful ark to be watched over and cared for by the man whom God had chosen to help Him while the waters were washing the earth.

When all the animals were safely in and Noah's

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

family with them they closed the door and waited for the rain. It must have been a very, very great rain indeed, for the Bible says, "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened."

This great rain lasted for forty days and forty nights. The rivers grew wider and deeper until they overflowed all the land and mingled with the lakes and seas and the whole earth was covered with water. You can imagine the people looking out of the windows and seeing the waters creep up over the grass, then over the bushes and and finally up and up until the tree tops were covered, and finally even the mountains. Then Noah and his family were glad that he had obeyed and trusted God, for the ark floated safely upon the waters. But everything that was not in the ark was drowned and the earth was washed quite clean.

When finally the rain ceased God sent a wind to dry up the waters so that Noah and his family and the animals he had saved might go out upon the earth again. The waters began to grow less

The Story of Noah's Ark

and less and finally one day the ark did not float, but rested on a mountain called Mt. Ararat. When the ark had staid firmly upon this mountain for a number of days and Noah saw that the waters were really going down and the flood was over, he one day opened the window of the ark and sent a raven out to see if it would find any level land to alight upon. But the raven's wings were very strong and it flew and flew over the waters without returning. Then Noah sent out a dove, for a dove could not fly so far as the raven and would return if it could find no ground on which to alight. The Bible says, "The dove could find no place for the sole of her foot," and she returned to the ark, so Noah knew that the waters were still on the earth.

After seven days more Noah again sent forth the dove and after a while she came back with an olive leaf in her mouth and then Noah knew that the waters were going down.

Then Noah waited seven days more and sent the dove again and this time she never came back, so Noah knew that she had found land and trees.

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Then Noah took the covering off the ark and opened the doors and you can imagine how glad both the people and the animals would be to see the sun shine in upon them and to go out again upon the earth. Then God spoke to Noah and told him to go forth from the ark and to take his wife and his sons and his sons' wives and all the animals with him. And when they were all on land again Noah built an altar and thanked God for having taken care of them all through the flood. And God blessed Noah and made him a promise that there should never be another flood, and the seal of that promise was a rainbow in the sky.



THE STORY OF ABRAHAM AND LOT

Genesis XII:1-12; XIII

IN a country that was a long way from Canaan or Palestine where the flood had been, there lived a man named Abram. Abram did not believe in the worship of idols such as the other people worshipped and wanted to go to a land where he could worship the true God.

One day he thought he heard the voice of God saying, "Get thee out of the land of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house unto a land that I will show thee."

So Abram took his wife Sara and his nephew, Lot, and all his servants and flocks of sheep and cattle and camels, and they traveled many, many miles across a rocky and desert land where nothing grew that was green and there was almost no water for themselves or their cattle. You can hardly imagine what such a journey would be like,

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

for in those days people had no carriages or cars in which to travel. They rode and carried all their possessions on the backs of camels or in rude wagons, and they had often to travel by night under the starry skies and rest by day because the days were so hot.

Abram's family, like all the people of that country, lived in tents even though they were a very rich family and might have been princes had they been willing to stay and worship idols with the others. So they carried their tents upon the backs of the camels and pitched them wherever they halted to rest.

Abram was one of the good men who loved God and listened for His voice, and wherever he halted for a rest he built an altar of stones. Here he knelt and prayed to God to guide and care for them and to lead them to the promised land.

When they had traveled for many days through the hot and sandy desert they finally came upon a land, called the land of Canaan, where were green grass and trees for shade and rivers where their cattle and camels might drink. Here Abram

The Story of Abraham and Lot

built another altar and thanked God for having brought them safely, but this was not the end of their journey. They traveled through this pleasant land for many days more, going now by day because the days were cooler and resting by night, under the stars.

After awhile there came a famine to the land they were traveling through and Abram and all his caravan went down into Egypt where there was plenty to eat for both man and beast. While they were in Egypt, the king, who was called Pharaoh, gave Abram a great many oxen and sheep and bondservants, also gold and silver. When the famine was over Abram took all his many possessions and went back into Canaan.

Now, Lot, Abram's nephew, also had herds of sheep and oxen and camels and bondservants, and the land where they first halted was not able to bear both Abram's and Lot's herds. There was much quarrelling between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, because both wanted the best pasturage for their cattle and the best waters for them to drink from.

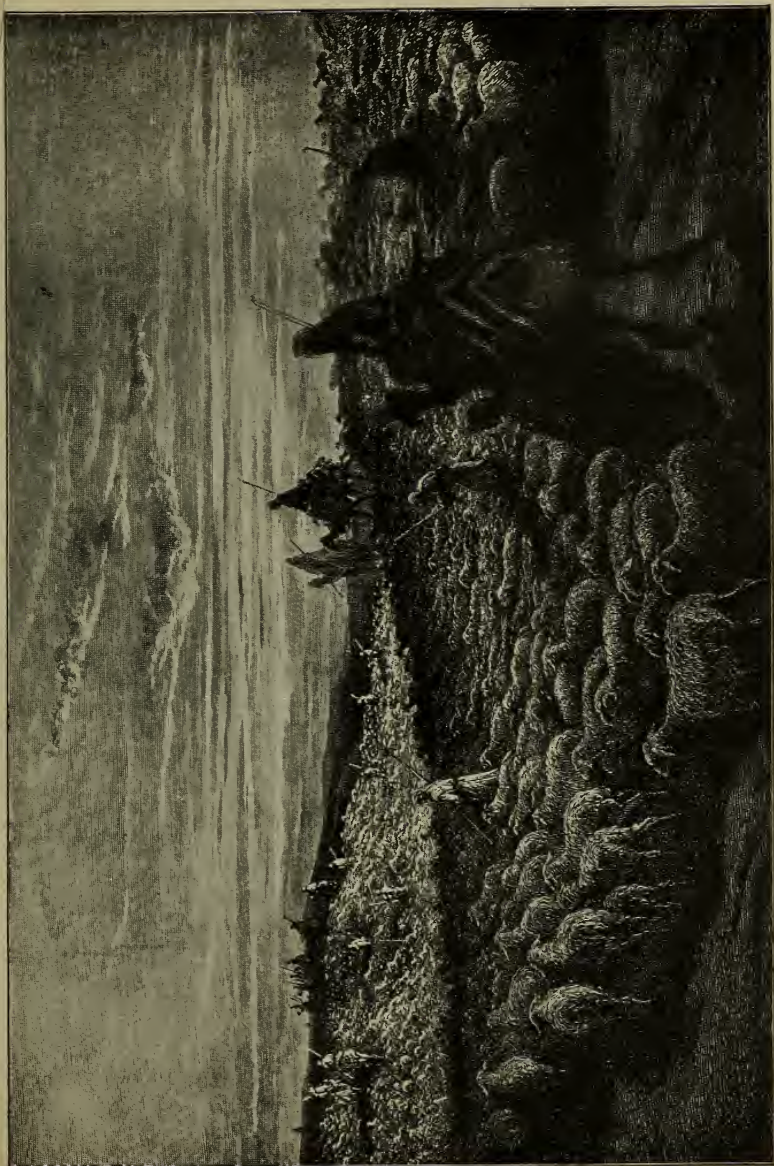
Bible Stories From the Old Testament

But Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, nor between thy herdsmen and my herdsmen for we are brethren." And he told Lot they had better divide the land between them and separate the herds and herdsmen.

"If thou wilt take the left hand," he said to Lot, "then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand then I will go to the left." For even though Abram was much older than Lot and should have had first choice he was quite willing that Lot should choose, hoping to satisfy and make him happy. This shows what a truly great man Abram was, for to be truly great is to be humble and unselfish and sweet.

But Lot was not a great man. He was selfish and grasping and wanted the best of everything that was to be had. So he chose all the beautiful plain of Jordan that lay beyond them, with its fertile pasturage and running rivers and he took his herds of cattle and sheep and camels and servants and went and dwelt upon it.

After Lot had gone away, Abram and his wife



The Story of Abraham and Lot

Sara, with all their servants and herds and flocks, traveled to the mountains of Canaan. Here God told him to lift up his eyes from where he stood on the mountain and look about him northward and southward and eastward and westward. And God told Abram that He would give him all the land which he could see. He told Abram to rise and walk through it, the length and breadth of it, and that it was all his. For God was pleased with Abram.

“WHEN KINGS GO FORTH TO BATTLE”

Genesis XIV

THERE was much fighting amongst the different nations and tribes of people in this country where Abram had come to dwell, but in the midst of it all he lived with his family of servants and his herds, making war upon none and respected by all.

One day a messenger came running to Abram's tent in great excitement and told him there had been a terrible battle in the valley where Lot dwelt, and that four kings with their armies had taken Lot and a great many others captive and had killed many of the people who lived in the valley and taken all their goods.

When Abram heard this he armed all his servants with swords and bows and arrows and spears and led them at night against the army of four kings. While the kings and their army were

“When Kings go Forth to Battle”

asleep Abram and his servants surrounded them and fell upon them and killed many. In the midst of the army they found Abram's nephew, Lot, and they took him and all the goods that the kings had captured and the women and servants and brought them away from the army that had taken them prisoners. And this shows again how great a man Abram was, to go into battle for the sake of Lot who had been selfish and unfair with him.

After all this had happened the Lord came to Abram in a dream and spoke to him and said, “Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.”

ABRAHAM AND THE ANGELS

Genesis XVIII:1-22

IN spite of all his riches and all the good things God had given to them, both Abram and Sara were often very sad and lonely, for there were no little children to call them father and mother, or to love and help them. People who have no little children are always sad and lonely at times. So Sara prayed to God that they might have a little child. And God spoke to Abram when he was ninety and nine years old and told him that he should yet have children and that his name should be changed from Abram to Abraham which means "Father of Many Nations," and his wife's name should be changed to Sarah.

One time when Abraham was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day he looked up, and lo, three angels stood beside him; and when he saw them he ran to meet them and bowed his head upon the ground. He begged them to sit under a tree and rest while he had water brought

Abraham and the Angels

to bathe their feet, which was a custom in that land.

So the three angels sat down to rest and Abraham ran into the tent and told Sarah to hurry and make some cakes. Then he ran out to where the cattle were feeding on the long, sweet grass under the shade of the trees, and he took from among them a young calf and gave it to a servant who killed and dressed it. And when the meat was cooked Abraham took butter and milk and the meat and cakes and set before the angels and they ate.

Then one of the angels asked Abraham where Sarah was and Abraham said, "In the tent." Then the angel told Abraham that Sarah should have a little son just as they had longed and prayed for.

Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old people and they could hardly believe that God really meant they should have a son, but the angel assured them and promised them again, and they believed and were glad. Then the angels went away, and Abraham walked a little way with them on their journey.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Genesis XXII: 1-15

WHEN Abraham was a hundred years old (for men lived to a great age in those days) there was a little son born to him and Sarah and they called him Isaac.

Abraham and Sarah loved this little son for whom they had prayed and waited so long, very, very much. Sarah was so glad that she said, "God hath made me to laugh so that all who hear me shall laugh with me." She rejoiced because she had been able to give this wonderful gift of a little son to Abraham in his old age.

Now in these olden days some of the people believed that the way in which to show their love and devotion to God was to build a great fire on an altar of stones and burn on it some lamb or dove or cattle, something that had blood. They believed that the smoke from this offering went

Abraham and Isaac

straight up to God and that when He saw it He would forgive them for their sins. They also believed that the more precious anything was to them the greater gift it would be to God and the more He would forgive them.

Nowadays people no longer believe in making offerings to God in this way, but in giving of their work and services and their love to God in doing things for other people. But in the olden days they knew no better and did what seemed right to them. Not until Jesus came and taught people how loving a Father God is and how much He needs us to help Him in His work, did they know how much more He cares for kindness and helpfulness to each other than for burnt offerings.

Abraham, fine, strong, good old man though he was, and loving God as he did, had not learned all these things. One time he thought God wanted him to make an offering to Him of something he loved very much; he even thought he heard the voice of God telling him to offer up his little son, Isaac, who was so very precious to Him.

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Now you know, of course, that God, who loves all little children even more than their own fathers and mothers do, and who sent His own beloved son, Jesus, on earth to bless little children, would never ask any father to burn his little boy as an offering to Him. The Hebrews didn't believe it either, except, as they said, to try Abraham's faith and see if he would really be willing to do it. But Abraham believed God wanted him to do it and he was willing, for he thought that Isaac belonged to God more than he did to him.

I should not like you to imagine how very sad Abraham's heart was when he took little Isaac and two of his servants and an ass loaded with wood for the altar fire, and set out for the mountain where the altar was to be built. It must have been a very, very sad journey, but we will like to think that God was watching over them in love, just waiting to see what Abraham would be willing to do for love of Him.

When they came to the mountain Abraham told the servants to wait there while he and Isaac



Abraham and Isaac

went on alone to the place where the offering was to be made. Perhaps Abraham did this because he did not want the servants to see how bitter this trial was to him, and very likely he wanted to be alone with his little son, Isaac.

Isaac had seen altar fires built and offerings made, so he understood it all; but when he saw the altar of stones and the wood ready for the fire and no lamb or sheep he said, "My father," and Abraham answered, "Here am I, my son." Then little Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham replied, and oh, how his sad heart must have ached when he thought God was requiring this great thing of him, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for the offering."

We do not know what little Isaac suffered when he knew that he was to be the offering, but we know that he must have been willing and obedient to his father, just as Abraham was obedient to God, and to what he thought was God's wish, for the Bible tells us that Abraham took little Isaac

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

and laid him upon the altar. But just then there came a clear, quick voice out of heaven calling, "Abraham! Abraham!" Abraham said, "Here am I!" And the angel, whose voice it was, said, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad; neither do thou anything to him." Abraham looked up and there was a ram caught by the horns in the bushes. He went and took the ram and offered that instead of his little son because he believed God had put it there to show him that he need not offer up his son.

Then Abraham and Isaac went back to their home, and we will like to think how very happy they must have been going back together, and how happy Isaac's mother must have been to see them coming and how she would run out to meet them and hold little Isaac close to her heart. And I also like to think how obedient Abraham was to what he believed to be God's will even though it was so terrible a thing; and best of all I like to think how God was watching over them in love.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

Genesis XXI:1-21

ABRAHAM had another son whose name was Ishmael and whose mother was called Hagar. Ishmael was older than Isaac and one day when there was a great feast being held, Isaac's mother, Sarah, thought she heard Ishmael mocking at Isaac. Sarah went to Abraham and asked him to send Hagar and her boy, Ishmael, away for she did not want Isaac to play with Ishmael.

Abraham loved Ishmael very much and he was troubled and grieved because Sarah wanted him to do this, so he went and prayed to God about it just as he always did about anything that troubled him. God told Abraham that it would be best for him to do as Sarah wanted him to and not to worry about Hagar and Ishmael, for he would take care of them and make Ishmael a great man when he grew up. So Abraham was

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

happier in his mind about them for he knew God would always do just as He promised. He rose up early in the morning and took bread and a bottle made of goat skin and filled with water and gave them to Hagar. Then he told her to take her little boy and go away. So Hagar and Ishmael went away and wandered in the wilderness which was a very wild and lonely place with no gardens or houses or people.

By and by both Hagar and little Ishmael grew very tired. There was no more water in the bottle and Ishmael cried and cried for a drink until Hagar could not bear the sound of his crying. She laid him down in the shade of some bushes and then went and sat down a long way off where she could not hear him cry, and she prayed to God. For Hagar thought her little boy was going to die for want of a drink and she wept.

But God heard Ishmael crying for water and He sent an angel to speak to Hagar.

“What aileth thee, Hagar?” the angel called, and then said, “Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the



HAGAR AND ISHMAEL IN THE DESERT

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Hagar and Ishmael

lad and hold him in thine hand.” And Hagar looked up and saw water coming out of the rocks where she had not seen it before, and she ran and got the little boy and gave him a drink, and oh, how glad and thankful to God she must have been to think that He had heard Ishmael and that he need not die for want of a drink.

Ishmael and his mother lived for many years in the wilderness until he was a grown man and had learned to be a famous archer, which means that he could shoot with bows and arrows. He lived in the wilderness always with his family and a great many other people, because they liked to live where they could move their tents from place to place wherever there was the best grass for their flocks and cattle and where there was water. And they were called Ishmaelites or Arabs. And there are tribes of these same people still living in the wildernesses of the same country to this day.

REBEKAH

Genesis XXIV

WHEN Abraham came to be a very old man, he was anxious that his son Isaac should marry and have a family of his own. He did not want him to marry one of the women of the land where they were now living, however, but wanted him to take one of the women from Abraham's own old home for a wife. So he sent a man servant whose name was Eliezer to choose a wife for Isaac.

The servant took ten camels and loaded them with beautiful presents of gold and silver and jewels for the bride that he would choose. He also took other servants with him and they traveled a long, long way over mountains and valleys for many days and nights. They rested often in the heat of the day by the side of streams of

Rebekah

water where the thirsty camels might drink, and traveled by night under the soft, dark, starry sky when it was cool and still.

When they had journeyed for many days they came to the country of Mes-o-po-ta-mia. This was Abraham's old home and here was the city where Abraham's brother, Nahor, lived.

It was evening when Eliezer and all his camels and servants came to the walls of the city. They stopped outside the walls at a well where the thirsty camels might drink.

It was the custom in that land for the girls and women to go down to the wells at evening to get water for the next day's use, and just as Eliezer and his great caravan came up to the walls the women were beginning to come down from the city with water jugs upon their shoulders and heads.

Now this servant whom Abraham had sent to choose a wife for Isaac thought he would choose the one who would be kind to dumb animals as well as to men. So while the tired camels kneeled down by the side of the well to rest and wait for

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water, Eliezer knelt too, with his hands clasped and raised in prayer and asked God to help him to be wise in choosing a wife for Isaac, Abraham's beloved son. He said that he would ask some fair maiden who had a water jug, to give him a drink, and if she also offered to draw water for his camels he would know her to be kind hearted and he would ask her to go back with him and be Isaac's wife.

Just then there came down from the city in the beautiful soft evening dusk a lovely young girl with a water jug resting on her shoulder and she came straight toward the well where the kneeling camels were and where Eliezer also knelt praying. When Eliezer saw her at the well he ran to meet her and said, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water from thy pitcher."

The maiden said, "Drink, my lord," and she hastened and filled the pitcher and gave him a drink. When she had given Eliezer a drink she said, "I will draw water for thy camels, also, until they have done drinking." And she hastened and emptied her pitcher into the drinking

Rebekah

trough and ran again to the well to draw water for all the camels.

The servant, seeing how kind she was, said to her:

“Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee, is there room in thy father’s house for us to lodge?”

You can imagine how pleased Eliezer must have been when she said: “I am Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor,” for Nahor was Abraham’s own brother. Rebekah told Eliezer there was plenty of room for them at her father’s house and that they had also both straw and provender, meaning that there was straw for the camels to sleep on and food for them to eat. So Eliezer roused up the tired camels and servants and made ready to go.

Before they started he took from out the camel’s packs a beautiful golden earring and two bracelets and gave them to Rebekah because she had been kind to him and his camels. Then he went to her home, thanking God for having led

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him to this beautiful maiden who already belonged to Abraham's own family.

Rebekah's father and her brother welcomed Eliezer and the other men that were with him and gave them water to bathe in and food for their camels and set meat before them. But Eliezer said that before he ate he would tell them his errand. So he told them that he was Abraham's servant and that Abraham was a very great and rich man; that the Lord had blessed him exceedingly and given him many flocks and herds and much silver and gold and many servants. He told them that all these riches Abraham had given to Isaac, his son, and that Abraham had now sent him, his servant, to choose from among his own people a maiden to be Isaac's wife. He told them how he had decided to choose the one that would be kind to his camels as well as to him, and how Rebekah had come down and offered to draw water not only for him but for all the camels. He told them that he believed God had led him directly to her and that they must now say whether Rebekah could go back with him to be



Rebekah

Isaac's wife. Laban, Rebekah's brother, and Bethuel, her father, both said they believed as Eliezer did, that God had sent him thither and that therefore they had nothing to say about it since God had directed the matter and that Rebekah should go back with him to be Isaac's wife. The man servant was so delighted because of Rebekah's beauty and her kindness that he knelt down and thanked God for having brought him here. Then he brought forth more presents, jewels of silver and jewels of gold and beautiful robes and gave them to Rebekah, and he also gave to her brother and her mother precious things.

He staid all night with Rebekah's people and then he told them he must go. Rebekah's mother and brother were sad at her going and begged the man servant to let her stay another few days, but the man servant asked them not to hinder him for it was a long journey, and he knew Abraham and Isaac would be anxious to know how well he had done his errand. So the mother and brother said they would call Rebekah and let her say whether she would go back with Eliezer or

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not. She came into the room and they said unto her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." Then all the camels and the servants were brought around and made ready to go and Rebekah with her own maid servants went away to be Isaac's wife.

While they were riding homeward, Rebekah and her maid servants and Abraham's man servant and the other servants that went with them, all on camels, Isaac was coming to meet them. One evening Isaac stopped in a field to rest and to think about this bride who was coming to him and whom he had never seen, wondering probably how she would look, whether she would be sweet and fair and if she would love him and be kind to him. Suddenly he lifted his eyes and saw a long line of camels coming toward him, their odd shapes rising and falling against the evening sky almost like ships on a rough sea. He knew instantly whom it must be and rose up and went toward them.

Rebekah, from her high seat on the camel, saw him also, and she asked of Eliezer, "What man is



Rebekah

this that walketh in the fields to meet us?" And the servant said, "It is my master."

Then Rebekah got down off her camel and took a veil and covered her face, for this was the custom of the day. When they met Eliezer talked with Isaac and told him all the things he had done and Isaac was pleased.

Isaac took Rebekah to his mother's tent and he loved her very dearly. She was good to him, and generous and kind, and the Bible says that when Isaac's mother died, Rebekah comforted him.

ESAU AND JACOB

Genesis XXV:27-34

ISAAC and Rebekah had twin sons whose names were Esau and Jacob. When these boys grew to be men Esau was a hunter and loved to be all day in the fields hunting and killing beasts and birds to eat; and Jacob was a shepherd and cared only to live quietly in his tents taking care of his father's flocks. Isaac was fonder of Esau than he was of Jacob, because Esau brought him fine venison to eat, but Rebekah loved Jacob best.

One time Esau had been for a long time out in the fields hunting, and he came in at night tired out and very faint and hungry. Jacob happened to be making pottage for the evening meal, and Esau said: "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint." Jacob told Esau that if he would give him his birthright he, Jacob, would give him the pottage. Now, a birth-

Esau and Jacob

right was the right of the eldest son to be the head of the family and to have a double share of all the property and riches their father possessed; and although these boys were twins, Esau was born first and was therefore entitled to the birthright when their father died.

Of course Esau had no right to sell his birthright for anything, but he was so hungry and faint that he thought he was going to die, and it would not matter. So he told Jacob he might have the birthright if only he would give him the pottage. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage and Esau gave up his birthright to Jacob, and this meant that when Isaac should die the property that should have gone to Esau would now go to Jacob and Esau would have nothing but what he got by working for Jacob.

ISAAC'S BLESSING

Genesis XXVII

WHEN Isaac came to be a very old man he wanted to give his blessing to Esau, his eldest son. The Bible does not tell us that Isaac knew whether Esau had given away his birth-right or not. Anyway Isaac wanted to bless Esau and a blessing was the same thing as a will is now, and it would mean that when he had blessed Esau with all his lands and flocks and herds and riches he had made him heir to them. So Isaac called Esau to him and said: "My son," and Esau answered, "Behold, here am I." Isaac said, "I am very old. I know not the day of my death. Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and bow and go out to the field and make me some savory meat such as I love and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die."

So Esau took his bow and quiver and went out to hunt the deer.

Isaac's Blessing

Then Rebekah, even though she had been so lovely and kind-hearted a maiden, did a wicked thing, and even though she did it because she loved Jacob very, very much, it was wrong just the same.

Rebekah wanted Jacob to have all his father's riches and flocks and herds, those that he intended to bless Esau with. It may be that she thought Jacob ought to have them because Esau had sold his right to them for a mess of pottage, but if she did she should have told Isaac so and not deceived him as she did. At any rate she told Jacob what Isaac was going to do and that Esau had gone to get venison that his father might eat and bless Esau before he died. And she told Jacob to go into the fields and get two fat kids and she would make savory meat of them and he, Jacob, should take the meat in and make his father, who was very old and almost blind, think he was Esau. Then his father would bless him with all the flocks and herds and riches. Jacob told her he was afraid his father would know he was not Esau because Esau had very rough hands with hair on

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them. So his mother took the skin of the kids and covered his hands and neck with it, so if his father felt of them he would be deceived. All this was very wrong of both Rebekah and Jacob, to deceive a poor, old blind man, and the only way for us to think of it is that perhaps they didn't understand just how wicked it was because they were blinded by selfishness.

Jacob took the meat and went to his father and his father said, "Who art thou, my son?" and Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau, thy first born. I have done accordingly as thou bade me. Arise, I pray thee, sit, and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me." Thus he deceived his father, though we must believe that he felt guilty in his heart, and we know that in after-years he was very, very sorry. Isaac said to him, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?" Then Jacob had to tell another lie, because one lie always brings another. He said, "Because the Lord, thy God brought it to me." And again he must have felt very guilty and wicked at saying God had helped him. Isaac

Isaac's Blessing

seemed to feel that perhaps he was being deceived, for he said, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not." So he took hold of Jacob's hands and felt the hair of the kid's skin that Rebekah had put there and he thought it was Esau; so he blessed Jacob and gave him all his lands and flocks and herds and riches and told him that he should be master of everything when he, Isaac, was dead.

It happened, however, that just as Isaac had finished his blessing of Jacob, Esau came in with the savory meat he had prepared, and he brought it to his father and told him to eat that his soul might bless Esau, his first born son. Then Isaac said, "Who art thou?" And Esau said, "I am they first born, Esau." And then when Isaac found out how he had been deceived he was angry and he trembled exceedingly, and said: "Who then is he that hath taken venison and brought it to me and I have eaten it before thou camest and have blessed him?"

When Esau heard how Jacob had deceived their

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old, blind father he was very, very angry, but to his father he cried out: "Bless me even also, Oh, my father. Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?" Isaac was very sorrowful because he had been deceived into giving away all the possessions he had meant Esau to have, but he had promised them to Jacob and he could not break his promise; so he told Esau that he would have to serve his brother, Jacob, but that he should always have plenty and should never want.

Esau was very angry at Jacob and said that Jacob had first taken away his birthright unfairly and had now stolen his blessing and that he would kill Jacob. Rebekah heard how angry Esau was and she told Jacob he must go away. Isaac called Jacob to him before he went and forgave and blessed him, and told him to go to Isaac's mother's old home, the home to which Eliezer had gone to find Rebekah, and there to choose him a wife, and live there. And Jacob went.



JACOB'S LADDER

Genesis XXVIII:10-22

JACOB and Esau were only young men when all this happened, hardly more than boys, in fact, and Jacob must have felt very lonely and homesick as he started out on his long journey. He had done a wicked thing, first, in taking advantage of his brother's hunger to gain his birth-right, and then in deceiving his old, blind father. Therefore his heart must have been very sorry and heavy.

He had to travel over a very lonely land, all sand and rocks as far as he could see, with thistles and prickley cactii growing over them.

When night came he looked about for a place in which to lie down and rest, but there was nothing but sand and rocks and it was very lonely. Perhaps he was a little bit frightened at being alone in such a lonely place, and if he had known that God is everywhere, as we do, he would have

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

knelt down and prayed to be forgiven and to be taken care of as we would do. But he thought God was angry with him and would not look upon him there. He gathered together some stones for pillows and laid his head upon them.

Of course his last thoughts before going to sleep would be troubled and sad and he would wish that he had not been wicked and deceitful so that he might be in his own bed at home with his father and mother and brother, and God overhead loving him. The desert must have looked very big and dark and lonely with no friendly trees about and no soft grass underneath, but only sand and rocks, and it must have been still, —very, very still.

The stars were there, though, the beautiful, twinkling shining stars, and they would twinkle down at Jacob lying there so lonely on a pillow of stones, and try to give him a message of love. Perhaps there was a moon, also, a soft, beautiful white moon that Jacob would watch coming up way across the desert, trailing a silvery light behind her like a long garment, and sending a

Jacob's Ladder

broad shaft of white light ahead of her that might look to a tired, lonely boy like a—yes, like a ladder that might even reach up to Heaven. And the moon and the stars would look very sweet and friendly to lonely Jacob and finally he would go to sleep with the broad, white shaft of light shining down upon him.

And while he was asleep God sent a dream to comfort him. He dreamed that he really saw a ladder, a ladder all silvery white and sparkling with thousands of tiny stars reaching from earth up into Heaven where all was light and music and sweetness, and that up and down this ladder beautiful angels, also all silvery and white, were walking. And he dreamed that at the top of the ladder, right at the very Door of Heaven, stood the Lord, and that the Lord spoke to Jacob and told him that He was Jacob's Father just the same as He was Isaac's and Abraham's. And that he would forgive Jacob and take care of him. "Behold," God said to him, "I am with thee and will keep thee in all places where thou goest."

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Then Jacob woke up and his heart sang for gladness because God had forgiven him and would always be with him. He was amazed also, to find that God was there, on the sandy, lonely desert with him just as He had been in Jacob's father's house. He sat up and looked about him and although the sparkling, shining ladder was gone he could feel God with him. "Surely," he said to himself in his surprise, "surely, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven." And Jacob looked about him at the long dreary stretches of desert sand and rocks, feeling a new joy in his heart that God could be even here.

So he took up the stones that had been his pillow and made an altar of them and anointed them with oil, which was a custom of that land, showing that it had been dedicated to God. And Jacob promised God that if He would watch over him and give him bread to eat and raiment to wear, and would sometime bring him back to his father's house, he would try to serve God faith-

Jacob's Ladder

fully, and that he would always give to God one-tenth of all he had. Then he left the altar of stones there, naming it Bethel, and went on his journey with a lighter heart, feeling as if God were with him and leading him.

Whenever you, dear children, are lonely or in trouble I hope you will look at the moon and the stars and remember Jacob's ladder, and the words which God spoke from it. "Behold, I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."

JACOB AND RACHEL

Genesis XXIX

FINALLY Jacob came to the land where his mother's brother, Laban, lived. Before him was a field, and in the field a great well of water where the shepherds brought their sheep to be watered. There were flocks of sheep lying all about the well. A great stone covered the well and this stone was taken off when they wanted to draw water for the sheep.

Jacob spoke to the shepherds who were there and asked them if they knew Laban and they said they did. He asked them if Laban was well and they said he was. "There is Rachel, Laban's daughter, coming now with sheep to water," they said.

Rachel came across the field driving her father's sheep for she took care of them.

Laban had two daughters; Leah who, the Bible

Jacob and Rachel

says, was tender-eyed, and Rachel who was very beautiful and fair to look upon.

When Jacob saw Rachel he went to meet her and told her that he was the son of Rebekah, her father's sister, and he kissed her. Rachel went and told her father that Jacob had come, and Laban ran out and greeted Jacob and kissed him and took him into their own house.

Jacob staid there a month helping Laban. Then Laban told Jacob that it was not fair he should work for nothing and asked him what he wanted in pay. Jacob told Laban that he loved his daughter Rachel, and that he would work seven years for her, if Laban would then give her to him to be his wife. And Laban said he was well pleased. So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days so great was his love for her. But when he had served these seven years Laban was not true to his promise, but said that Jacob must take Leah to be his wife first, because it was the law that the youngest daughter might not be married before the eldest. So Jacob served seven more years for Rachel.

ESAU'S FORGIVENESS

Genesis XXXIII

YOU will remember that Jacob was sent away from the land where his father and mother lived because he had deceived his father and made his brother Esau angry.

He lived in this far land where he had worked so long for Rachel twenty years, but at last he grew homesick to see some of his own people and he sent word to Esau that he was coming home and Esau sent word back that he would come to meet Jacob.

Now, of course, Jacob felt guilty in his heart because he had done wrong toward Esau. When he heard that his brother was coming to meet him he was afraid and prayed to God not to let Esau harm him or the women and children who were with him. Then he took a great many presents, goats and sheep and camels, and sent them to Esau by his servants and told them when they

Esau's Forgiveness

met Esau to say that these were a present from his brother Jacob who was very rich.

On the next day he saw Esau coming and he was afraid. He put his wife, Rachel, and his youngest son, Joseph, whom he loved best of all, behind his other ten sons, who were Leah's children, and all the other men and the camels so they would not get hurt if Esau had come to fight.

Esau, however, had not come to fight, but had come to meet Jacob because he was glad to see his brother after so many years and he embraced him and kissed him and they both wept, for Jacob was very sorry now that he had deceived his father and wronged Esau.

Esau asked him what all the number of sheep and goats and camels that he had met on the way meant, and Jacob told him that they were a present from him. Esau said that he had all the possessions he needed and that Jacob should keep his own. But Jacob was so glad to be forgiven that he begged Esau to accept the present. To please him Esau did and they were both glad they had met again after so many years.

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Then they went on their journey, Esau and his servants and camels going on before, and Jacob with all his flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, his servants and the women and children of his families following behind, for the little lambs and the children must go slowly.

And now God told Jacob that his name should also be Israel, and that to him should be given the land which had been Abraham's and Isaac's.

Long afterward Jacob took another journey. God told him to take all his household, his servants and his eleven children and cattle and go up to Bethel in the Land of Canaan and to make an altar there to God. This was the same Bethel where Jacob had dreamed of the ladder and felt God's forgiveness so long ago.

They travelled for many days and when they had but a little way further to go Rachel, Jacob's beautiful wife that he had waited twice seven years for, was very ill and died, and in dying she left a little baby son whom Jacob named Benjamin, and Joseph who was Rachel's other son loved this little baby and took care of it after the mother died.

JOSEPH'S DREAMS

Genesis XXXVII:1-12

JOSEPH, you will remember was best beloved of Jacob, his father, before Benjamin was born, because he was the child of his old age. He was very much like other little boys whom you may know. He was a good boy and so much loved by his father that perhaps he had been just a little bit spoiled by being told how good he was. He may have thought himself a little bit better than his brothers (which he undoubtedly was) and that would account for what might seem like small boastfulness about his dreams and for some lack of wisdom in telling them, for he might have known they would antagonize his brothers. All boys, you know, like to dream about what wonderful things they are going to do when they grow up, and very likely it was such dreaming that brought Joseph to his

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other dreams. His brothers, however, were jealous of him and hated him. They could hardly speak civilly to him when they met or say, "Peace," which was the word of greeting in that land.

The first dream of which Joseph told his brothers was like this: He dreamed that he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the fields and that his own sheaf stood upright and all his brother's sheaves stood round about and bowed to his sheaf, kneeling to it as if in deference. His brothers were very angry at this. They thought Joseph meant that he should reign over them and have power over them and they hated him all the more.

Then Joseph dreamed another dream in which the sun and the moon and all the eleven stars knelt to him in deference and this dream he told to his father and brothers also. His father rebuked him and asked him if he thought he and his mother and all his brothers were going to bow themselves to the earth for him. But while Joseph's brothers only hated him for his dreams

Joseph's Dreams

his father remembered them, thinking in his heart, perhaps, that some day his best beloved son, Joseph, might indeed reign over all of them and be so great a man that they would bow themselves to the earth before him.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

Genesis XXXVII:12-36

JACOB loved Joseph so much better than he did any of the rest of his sons that he made for him a beautiful coat, a coat of many colors, such as princes wore. Of course Jacob loved little Benjamin even as he did Joseph, for Benjamin also, was the son of his old age and the son of Rachel whom Jacob had loved so dearly and who had died at Benjamin's birth; but Benjamin was yet a very little boy and had to stay at home with his father while the other sons were out upon the fields tending their flocks.

One time Jacob sent Joseph out to the fields where his older brothers were with their sheep to see if they were all well and the flocks all right or if they needed anything, for shepherds had to stay out upon the hills and in the fields for many days at a time without going home.

Joseph Sold by his Brothers

Joseph wandered about in the fields for some time looking for his brothers and finally a man found him there and asked him whom he was seeking.

“I am looking for my brothers,” said Joseph, “tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks.” The man told him that they had gone from these fields and he showed him the way to where they had gone. Then Joseph set out upon his journey again, for the pastures where the sheep were being fed were several days’ journey from his home.

The brothers saw Joseph coming when he was yet a long way off and before he had even got near them they began plotting against him.

“Let us slay him,” they said, “and cast him into some pit, and we will tell our father that some beast hath devoured him.”

But Reuben, the oldest brother, who was kinder hearted than the rest, felt sorry for Joseph and said: “Let us not slay him, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness and lay no hand upon him.” He thought, perhaps, that if

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he could get the others to agree to this he, himself, would come again when they did not know it and take Joseph out of the pit and send him to their father.

It was no uncommon thing in these days and in this land to cast people into a pit or empty cistern when they were wanted to be rid of, as you will find when you come to read other tales of the Eastern land.

So when Joseph came among his brothers they caught him and stripped him of his coat, his coat of many colors that his father had made, and they cast him into the pit.

Then the brothers sat down to eat (all but Reuben, who had gone a little way off thinking to get a chance to come back when they were gone and rescue Joseph), and as they were eating they heard the tinkle of bells such as camels wore. They looked up and saw a band of Ishmaelites coming and the camels were loaded with spices and balm and myrrh, things which the Ishmaelites were going to sell in Egypt, a rich country to the south.



Joseph Sold by his Brothers

You will remember that the Ishmaelites were the people who were named after Ishmael, that son of Hagar who almost died of thirst in the wilderness, and who afterward always lived in the wilderness because he liked the wild life there.

When the brothers saw the Ishmaelites coming, one of them, Judah, said to the others: "What will it profit us if we do kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh."

The others liked this plan better than killing Joseph, so they took him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver and the Ishmaelites carried him off down into Egypt to be a slave.

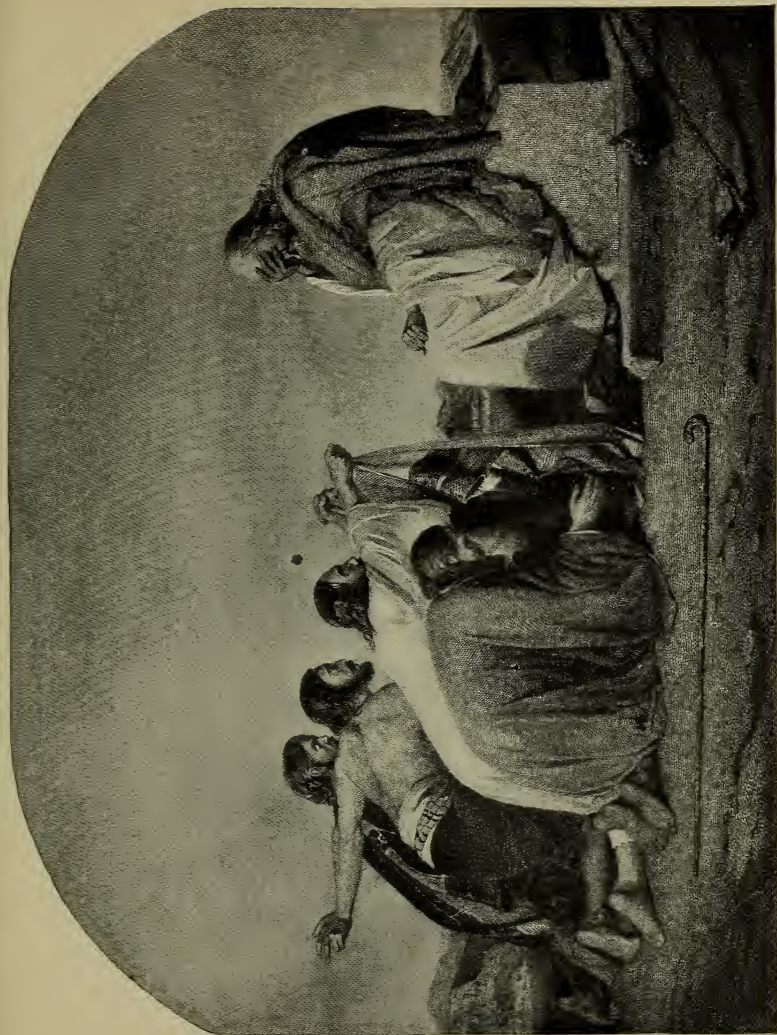
Now Reuben, who had been away while they sold Joseph, came back, and when he saw that Joseph was not there he was frightened. He was afraid his brother was killed and he took hold of his clothes and tore at them and cried: "The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?"

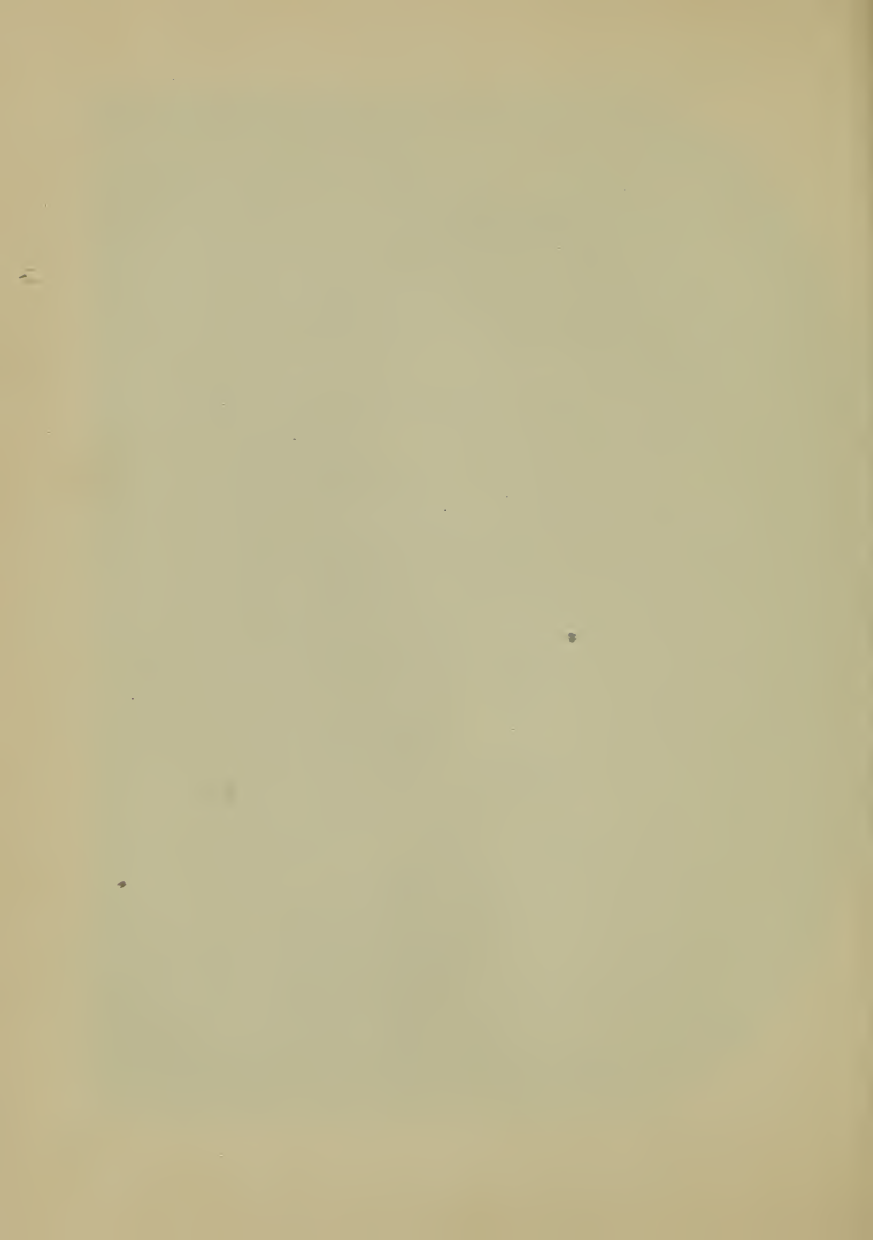
Then the other brothers did a heartless and

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cruel thing. They killed a kid and took Joseph's pretty coat and dipped it in the blood. They sent it to their father and asked him if he knew whose coat it was.

The poor old man did know the coat for he had made it for his loved son, and he wept and wrung his hands and cried: "It is my son's coat. An evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." All his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him but he would not be comforted, and yet they did not tell him that it was a cruel trick. Perhaps they were afraid of Jacob's wrath if they did. Jacob was a broken-hearted old man and said, "I will go to my grave mourning for my son."





JOSEPH IN PRISON

Genesis XXXIX:1-23

THE Ishmaelites, to whom the brothers had sold Joseph, sold him again to Potiphar, who was a captain of the king of Egypt's guard, and who lived in a splendid house and had many slaves and servants. Joseph was so good and faithful and honest that Potiphar trusted him with all the treasures of his house and everything he had because he believed that the Lord favored Joseph and that everything would go well under Joseph's care. He made him ruler over all his lands and houses and all the people of his house. But Potiphar's wife was a wicked woman and because Joseph would not obey some of her commands which he knew it would be wrong to do, she turned Potiphar against Joseph and had him put in prison.

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God knew that Joseph had done right, however, and so even though he was in prison God helped him to be always a good man. He was so trustworthy and earnest that the keeper of the prison saw what a faithful man he was just as Potiphar had done, and he put all the prisoners under his charge, and gave him complete control over everything in the prison.

THE DREAMS OF THE BUTLER AND BAKER

Genesis XL:1-23

YOU will remember that Joseph had always been a dreamer and had been fond of interpreting his dreams, that is, to tell what he thought they meant.

When he was cast into prison in Egypt it happened that Pharoah, the King of Egypt, had become angry with his chief butler and chief baker and they were put into the same prison with Joseph.

In those old days the people believed that there was a meaning to all their dreams and at almost every king's court there was some one who was called the Interpreter of Dreams.

One morning Joseph came into the room where the butler and baker were imprisoned and found

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them looking very sad. He said to them, "Wherefore look ye so sadly today?"

They told him that they had dreamed a dream, each of them, and there was no one to tell them what their dreams meant. Joseph told them to tell him their dreams and he would interpret them. So the chief butler told his dream which was this:

"In my dream," said he, "behold a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches; and it was as though it was budded and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes. And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

Then Joseph said to him: "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head and restore thee to thy place. And thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast butler." Then Joseph begged the butler to remember him

The Dreams of the Butler and Baker

when Pharaoh should have restored the butler to his favor and to mention him to the king. For, he told the butler, he had been stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews and had done nothing to deserve being put into a dungeon.

When the chief baker heard the interpretation of the chief butler's dream he was pleased with Joseph and told his dream.

"I, also, was in my dream and, behold, I had three white baskets upon my head; and in the uppermost basket there was all manner of baked meat for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head."

Then Joseph interpreted his dream and told him that the three white baskets were three days and that in three days Pharaoh would have the baker's head cut off and he would be hanged from a tree and the birds would come and eat his flesh from off him.

Now, this is what the Bible says came true:

"And it came to pass the third day which was Pharaoh's birthday that he made a feast unto all his servants. And Pharaoh restored the chief

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butler again to his butlership where he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand as he had used to do; but he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph but forgot him."

PHARAOH'S DREAMS

Genesis XLI:1-46

WHEN Joseph had been in prison for two years Pharaoh had a dream. He dreamed that he stood by a river and that there came up out of the river seven well-favored and fattened kine, which means cattle, and they fed in a meadow. And after them came up seven ill-favored and lean fleshed kine and they stood on the river bank beside the others. And the seven ill-favored and lean kine ate up the seven well-favored and fattened kine. And then Pharaoh awoke.

Then he slept and dreamed another dream and behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind came up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke again. When

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he awoke he was troubled and he sent for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men, and told them his dreams but there was none of them that could interpret them. Then the chief butler spoke up and said that he remembered while he was prisoner in the ward of the guard's house with the chief baker, he and the baker also had dreamed dreams, and that a young man, a Hebrew, named Joseph, had interpreted their dreams, and that what he had told them had come to pass.

Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph. They brought him hastily out of the dungeon and he shaved himself and changed his clothes and came to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream and there is none that can understand it to interpret it, and I have heard that thou canst interpret a dream."

Joseph told Pharaoh that it was not himself who could interpret dreams but that God would speak through him. Then Pharaoh told him his dreams about the seven well-favored and fattened kine and the seven ill-favored and lean kine,

Pharoah's Dreams

and about the seven ears of corn upon one stalk and the seven thin and wind blasted ears upon another. And Joseph answered Pharaoh like this: "God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is the same. And the seven thin and ill-favored kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine." Joseph told Pharaoh there would come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And that after that there should be seven years of famine and all the plenty would be forgotten, that the famine would be very, very great and there would be terrible suffering. He also told Pharaoh that the reason God had given him two dreams both meaning the same thing was because God wanted him to be sure and understand what was about to happen so he could prepare for it, and that it would happen very soon. Joseph told Pharaoh too, that he ought to look about for a man who was wise and just and set

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him over the land of Egypt, one who would appoint officers to see that in the years of plenty great amounts of corn and grain were stored away against the years of famine.

Pharaoh thought this was the wise thing to do and he asked his servants if they knew of such a man whom he could make the ruler over all Egypt under him, but no one knew of such a one so Pharaoh said to Joseph:

“Because God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt rule over my house, and according to thy word shall my house be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. See, I have made thee ruler over all Egypt.” And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand. He put garments of fine linen on Joseph and a gold chain about his neck; and Joseph rode in one of the king’s chariots and all the people shouted to him and bowed before him just as he had dreamed in his youth.

JOSEPH, THE RULER

Genesis XLI:46-57; XLII:1-38; XLIII: 1-15

FOR seven years after Joseph ruled Egypt under Pharaoh the harvests were wonderfully plentiful. There was more corn than the people could use or knew what to do with. So Joseph had all the corn that the people did not need gathered into storehouses against the time when the corn would not grow and there should come a famine; a famine is a time when there are no harvests and there is nothing to eat, and people suffer from hunger.

And sure enough, just as Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh's dream, there *was* a famine which lasted seven years. The famine was in all the other countries as well as in Egypt, but Egypt was all the country that had corn in its storehouses or anything to eat, and this was only be-

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cause of Joseph's thoughtfulness and wise provision.

When the people of other countries heard that Egypt had more corn than was needed by the people they went there to buy corn for themselves. Among those who came were Joseph's own brothers—all of them but Benjamin, the youngest. He staid at home with his father, Jacob, because Jacob was afraid something might happen to him as it had to his other son Joseph, for Jacob had never ceased to mourn for Joseph, whom he thought was dead.

Now, of course Joseph's brothers had all heard of this great and mighty ruler of Egypt of whom they had come to buy corn, but they never dreamed that it was their own brother Joseph whom they had sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites a good many years ago. Joseph knew them at once, however, even though they were grown men and thin and lean from hunger, but he wanted to see what kind of men they had grown to be, so he did not tell them who he was but spoke roughly to them and said, "Whence come ye?"

Joseph, the Ruler

They answered and said, "From the Land of Canaan to buy bread." Joseph pretended not to believe them and told them he thought they were spies come to see how much corn there was in Egypt. But they told him they were twelve sons of one man who lived in the Land of Canaan and that the youngest of these sons was with their father, Jacob, in Canaan, and the other one was *not*, meaning he was dead, for they meant Joseph and they thought he would have died in slavery before this.

Then Joseph told them that he still believed them to be spies and that they must all go to prison for three days. On the third day he went to them and told them that all but one of them might take corn and go home to their families who were starving, but that one must stay in prison until they came again and that when they came again they must bring their youngest brother or he would never let them have any more corn. So they left their brother in the prison and went sorrowfully toward their home for they knew their old father would be deeply grieved.

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When Joseph had filled their sacks with corn he told his servants not to take his brothers' money but to put it into the sacks right on top of the corn. When the brothers stopped on their way home to rest their camels and eat they opened their sacks and were very much amazed at finding the money and could not understand it.

When they came to their home and told their father about the journey and that the great ruler had said they could never have any more corn unless they brought their youngest brother back with them, the father was deeply grieved and worried, and he said: "Me ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is *not* and Simeon (the brother whom Joseph had kept) is not and Benjamin ye will take away." And he said Benjamin should not go.

Reuben, the kind-hearted eldest brother who had tried to save Joseph from the pit years ago, told his father not to worry about Benjamin, for he would take care of him and would surely bring him back.

Jacob was very unhappy and reproached them

Joseph, the Ruler

for having ever told the great ruler that they had a younger brother at home, but they told him how the great ruler had asked them all sorts of questions about their home and their father, if he was an old man, and if he was well, and if they had another brother; and how, when they had told him they had, he had said they must bring him when they came again or they could have no more corn. Finally Jacob had to let Benjamin go, for the corn was nearly all gone again and there was no other place to get any. But he was very unhappy about it for he thought the great ruler would keep Benjamin as he had Simeon, perhaps for a slave, never dreaming that it was his own dear Joseph.

He told them that if they must take Benjamin with them, to take also a present to the ruler; the best fruits in the land, a little balm, some honey, spices, myrrh, nuts and almonds. He told them to take double money in their hands and also to take back the money they had found in their sacks of corn, because it might have been an over-

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sight and they be blamed for having carried it away. Then he added:

“And God Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

So the brothers took the presents and the double money and their youngest brother Benjamin and went again into Egypt.

JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN

Genesis XLIV; XLV: 1-25

WHEN the brothers came again into the land of Egypt bringing Benjamin with them, Joseph told his servants to bring all of them into his own house and to make a feast for them because he wanted them to eat with him.

The brothers did not know what to make of such kind treatment and they were afraid that Joseph had missed the money that was not taken for their corn before and had thought they meant to be dishonest; so they told one of Joseph's servant's about the money and asked him to explain to Joseph that they knew nothing about it; but the servant told them not to worry about that because he had put it in the sacks and it was all right. Then the brothers told the steward how they had brought presents for Joseph so he would

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let their brother Benjamin go back with them, and perhaps Simeon too. But the servant told them Joseph would not want their presents and he gave them water to bathe in. When Joseph came in they bowed down to him just as he had dreamed they would when he was a boy. They wanted to give him the presents they had brought, but he was more anxious to hear about his father. He said: "Is your father well? Is the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" And they told him he was.

Then Joseph looked up and saw his youngest brother Benjamin and he said, "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake to me?" And when they told him it was he said: "God be gracious to thee, my son." Then Joseph had to go out of the room for he wanted to go to Benjamin and embrace him, he was so glad to see him, but he was not yet ready to tell his brothers who he was.

Finally the brothers were ready to start upon their journey and Simeon was going with them for Joseph had allowed him to go. Again Joseph had

Joseph and Benjamin

ordered his men to put the brothers' money back into their sacks, and into Benjamin's he had told them to put his own silver drinking cup.

When the brothers had gone but a little way on their journey a man came running after them and said that Joseph had sent him to see if any of them had his silver drinking cup. The brothers were all very sure that none of them had it, so sure, indeed, that they told the man if any of them had it that one should go back and be Joseph's slave. The man looked through all their sacks and did not find it until he came to Benjamin's and there he found it. Then the brothers were dreadfully frightened and grieved, for they had said that the one who had it should go back and be a slave and they knew that if Benjamin had to go back their poor old father would die of grief. So they all turned around and went very sorrowfully back to Joseph's house where Joseph was waiting for them.

One of the brothers spoke to Joseph and told him that they had no idea how the cup came there but that they had said if it were found in any

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

one of their sacks the owner of that sack should go back and be a slave to Joseph. This brother, who was Judah, begged Joseph to let Benjamin go home and to take him instead for a slave, which was a very noble thing to do even if he had been wicked a long time before to Joseph. He spoke very sorrowfully to Joseph reminding him how he (Joseph) had asked them if they had a father or a brother and how they had answered him, "We have a father, an old one, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him." Judah reminded him how he had commanded them to bring this younger brother and how they had told him that if this child should leave his father, the old man would die of grief. "But," Judah said, "You commanded us to bring him, saying we should have no more corn if we did not. So we told our father and he was torn with grief, saying "one son is already dead, having been slain by wild beasts (meaning Joseph), and now if ye take this one away from me and mischief befall him ye

Joseph and Benjamin

shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.' ” And Judah told Joseph that now, if they had to go back and tell their father that Benjamin was kept by the great ruler of Egypt as a slave their father would surely die, and it would come to pass that his gray hairs had been brought down with sorrow to the grave. And he implored Joseph to let Benjamin go, for if Benjamin had to stay their father would blame Judah also, because he had told their father that he would surely bring the boy back in safety.

Then Joseph could not wait any longer. He sent all the servants out of the room and then told his brothers who he was. “I am Joseph, your brother,” he cried, and he stretched out his arms to them, so glad and loving he was, and he wept so that the servants outside heard him. The very first question he asked was, “Is my father yet alive?” But his brothers were so surprised and amazed that they could not reply. Then Joseph held out his arms again and begged them to come near to him and told him he was really and truly the little brother they had sold into Egypt so long

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ago. When they did believe him they began to tell him how very sorry they had been that they were so wicked as to sell him for a slave; but Joseph told them not to regret it for it had all turned out for the best, that he believed the hand of God had been in it all through the way, and that God had sent him here to save their lives and a great many more people's lives by taking care of the corn. He said, "So it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Then he told them to make haste and go home to their father and tell him that they had found Joseph, and to bring him back with them to Egypt that Jacob might see how great a man his beloved son had become; and he told them to tell his father to hurry and tarry not, for he was in such haste to see him. He told them also to bring all their people and their flocks and herds and servants, and that they should live there in his land all the days of their lives and he would take care of them through the famine and afterward.



Joseph and Benjamin

Then he embraced Benjamin and wept, and he kissed all his brothers, for he had long ago forgiven them their cruelty to him and he loved them. Then the brothers hastened homeward and Joseph told Pharaoh his good news, that his father and brothers were coming, and Pharaoh was glad and told him to make great preparations for receiving them.

JOSEPH AND HIS FATHER

Genesis XLV:25-28; XLVI:1-8

WHEN Joseph's brothers came to their home in Canaan where their old father, Jacob, was so anxiously waiting for them they eagerly told him all the story of the great ruler in Egypt. How he had sold them corn and then put the money back in their bags; how he had insisted on their bringing Benjamin back with them; of the finding of the cup in Benjamin's sack, and at last they said:

“And this great ruler, this mighty prince who ruleth over all Egypt is thine own son, thy lost son, Joseph, who was not killed by wild beasts, but whom we sold into Egypt for twenty pieces of silver, long ago.”

You can imagine that Jacob could hardly believe them for he had so long thought Joseph

Joseph and His Father

dead. The Bible says, "his heart fainted." But when his sons showed him all the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry the women and little children, the ten asses laden with all manner of good things from Egypt, and ten more asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father and their families to eat on the way, he believed that Joseph was alive and had sent for him and he said, "It is enough. Joseph, my son, is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

So Jacob took all his family and his sons and their families and all their flocks and camels and started for Egypt where Joseph was.

One night they stopped at a place called Beer-sheba to rest and sleep. They pitched their tents, tied the camels out to feed and turned the flocks loose with men to watch them.

Jacob lay in his tent where the stars shone in at the open door and suddenly he thought he heard a voice calling, "Jacob, Jacob." And Jacob answered, "Here am I." Then the voice said, "I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt for I will there make of thee a

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt and I will surely also bring thee up again, and Joseph, thy son, shall put his hand upon thine eyes.’’

So Jacob was comforted and in the morning his sons put him again in the wagon, with all their wives and their little ones and they went on their journey, seventy people all together.

Judah, that brother of Joseph’s who had spoken so sorrowfully to him about Benjamin went on ahead to tell Joseph that his father was coming. Then Joseph, all robed in beautiful garments like a prince, went in a chariot trimmed with silver and gold to meet his father.

We will like to think of how they saw each other coming from afar off. Joseph in his wonderful chariot drawn by beautiful horses, and Jacob, the old father, in a wagon made comfortable with soft pillows and blankets, with flocks of sheep and droves of cattle and camels; and of how, when they saw each other coming they would cry to the horses to hurry and to the men to drive faster, and of how when finally they met, Joseph would leap

Joseph and His Father

from his chariot and run to his father, and how they threw their arms about each other and wept. Jacob, the old father who had mourned the loved son as dead for so many years, and Joseph the little boy sold into slavery, but now a mighty prince.

We can hardly imagine how happy they must have been, but the Bible tells us that Jacob said, "Now I am content to die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, the king, that his father and all his brothers and their families had come, and Pharaoh was glad for Joseph's sake and he gave them a piece of land for their own to live in called the Land of Goshen. And here they all lived happily until Jacob died.

THE STORY OF MOSES AND THE BUL- RUSHES

Exodus I:15-22; II:1-25

JACOB, the father of the twelve sons, had another name, and this name was Israel. The people of his families were called Israelites just as the people of Ishmael's families were called Ishmaelites. You will remember how all Jacob's families, the Israelites, went with him down into Egypt to be with Joseph and live in the Land of Goshen which Pharaoh gave them.

After they had lived there a good many years this old king Pharaoh died and a new king Pharaoh came to reign in his stead. This new king did not know Joseph, for Joseph was dead too, so of course he had not the love for Joseph's people that the old king had. When he saw how many Israelites (who were really Hebrews, you know, and people of another land and another religion) there were getting to be in Egypt he

The Story of Moses and the Bulrushes

was afraid there would soon come to be more Hebrews than Egyptians in Egypt so he made a dreadful law. This law was that all the little boy babies of the Hebrews should be killed and all the girl babies should be saved alive.

Soon after this cruel law was made one of the Hebrew women gave birth to a little boy baby. Of course she loved him very dearly for he was a beautiful, healthy child, and she determined that he should not be killed. She hid him in her house for three months, but then he grew so big that she could no longer hide him and she was afraid the king would find him and kill him. So she made a little ark, or basket, or bulrushes and covered it with pitch outside that the water might not creep in. Then she lined the basket with something soft, and early one morning she laid the baby in it and put it gently down amongst the rushes at the river's edge. The baby's sister, who was twelve years old and whose name was Miriam, staid near by to see that nothing harmed the baby and if any one should come to get it.

Pharaoh's daughter (who, being the daughter

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of a king must have been a princess, you know) came down to the river to bathe, and her maid servants walked along by the river's edge.

When the princess saw the little basket amongst the rushes she wondered what it could be and sent her maid to fetch it. The maid did so and the princess opened it. She must have been very much surprised to find a beautiful little baby in the basket, but when the child cried the princess lifted it out in her arms and held it very gently, saying, "This must be one of the Hebrew children."

Then the baby's sister, Miriam, came running up to the princess and said, "Shall I go and call a nurse of the Hebrew women that she may nurse the child for thee?" And the princess said to her, "Go."

The little maid hurried away, glad that her baby brother was cared for, and she called her mother—the baby's own mother. You can think how glad this mother must have been to care for her own baby and to think that the Princess would not let him be killed.



The Story of Moses and the Bulrushes

Pharaoh's daughter told her to take the baby and nurse it and that she, herself, would watch over it and not let the cruel king kill it. She named him Moses which means "raised up," for, said the princess, "I drew him out of the water."

The princess took care of Moses a great many years until he grew to be a man, and he was taught many things as a princess's son should be. But all these years Moses remembered his own people, the Hebrews, and was sorry for them. He knew they were not happy under the rulership of this King Pharaoh as they had been under the old king and Joseph.

One time Moses saw an Egyptian strike a Hebrew and he was very angry, so angry that he struck the Egyptian and killed him. But when the Egyptians knew that Moses had killed one of their men they were angry at him and he no longer dared stay among them but went away and lived in another land called Midian.

You will think there was a great deal of fighting and killing and cruelty in these old days, and so there was; but it was only because they did not

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know any better. You see Jesus had not yet come to teach people that fighting and killing and cruelty were against God's laws and that when people loved one another and tried to help one another to be good they were doing what God wants them to do. The people listened for the voice of God, to be sure, but very often they did not understand Him.

MOSES AND THE SHEPHERD GIRLS

Exodus II:15-25; III:1-22

YOU will remember that when first the Israelites went to live in the Land of Goshen with Joseph as ruler under King Pharaoh, they were very happy, and that when this King Pharaoh and Joseph were both dead, another King Pharaoh reigned and they were made slaves and were not allowed to go back to the land of their fathers, the Land of Canaan, when they wanted to. They cried to God and groaned in their bondage and prayed God to remember them and deliver them out of slavery to the Egyptians.

Now, when Moses fled from Egypt he went to the Land of Midian. One day when he was wandering about before he had found a home or any place to stay he sat down beside a well to rest.

There was a priest of Midian who had seven

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daughters, and it happened that as Moses sat there by the well resting, these daughters of the priest came down to the well to draw water and fill the trough for their father's flocks of sheep to drink.

You may remember how Rachel came down to a well in the same way to water her father's flocks the time that Jacob met her there. You see in this country every one who was at all wealthy had great flocks of sheep and cattle and goats, and in the fields were wells covered over with great stones where the shepherds brought their flocks to drink at troughs that were built beside the wells.

When these daughters of the priest of Midian came to the well to draw water for their flocks there were a great many other shepherds there also who had come to water their flocks. They were rude men, many of them, rough and without gentleness, and they drove the shepherd girls away from the well that they might draw water for their own flocks.

Moses was kinder hearted than these shepherds and he rose up and helped the girl shepherds to

Moses and the Shepherd Girls

draw water, keeping the rough and ill-mannered shepherds back until they were through.

When the girl shepherds had finished watering their flocks they returned with them to their father, the priest, and he was surprised that they were back so soon. "How is it," he said, "that ye are come so soon today?"

They replied, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water for us and watered the flocks."

Then the priest asked where this man was and sent his daughters to find him that he might thank him. They did so and after that Moses married one of the priest's daughters, Zip-por-rah, and lived in their house and tended the priest's flocks.

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

Exodus III

ONE day Moses took the priest's flocks away over to the back of the desert where he came to a mountain called Horeb, the mountain of God.

As he was going slowly up the side of this mountain he thought he saw something ahead of him that looked like a bush on fire. He went nearer and saw that the bush indeed seemed to be burning and yet it never burned up nor was consumed. Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

Then, says the old Hebrew tale, God called to him out of the midst of the burning bush, and said, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses answered, "Here am I."

Then God said, "Draw not nigh hither. Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon

Moses and the Burning Bush

thou standest is holy ground." And Moses did as God bade him and hid his face, for he was afraid of so marvelous a sight.

Then God said: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land flowing with milk and honey."

God told Moses that He had chosen him to go down into Egypt to Pharaoh and bring back the Israelites out of the land of bondage. At first Moses was afraid. He said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring back the Children of Israel?" But God told him that He would be with him all the way. He told Moses to go down into Egypt and gather together all the elders and rulers of the tribes of Israel and tell them that God had appeared to him in a burning bush and had commanded him to go into Egypt and deliver them from bondage. He also told Moses that He knew the king of Egypt would not let the

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Hebrews go because he wanted them for slaves, but that He, God, would smite the Egyptians and then Pharaoh would let them go.

These old, old stories told by the Hebrews of how God appeared to them are very wonderful and beautiful stories. They were constantly thinking of God and what his message to them might be, and so they were able to see "sermons in stones and books in running brooks."

MOSES, THE DELIVERER

*Exodus IV:29-31; V; VII; VIII; X; XIII; XIV;
XVI*

M OSES, with his brother Aaron, whom God had sent to meet Moses in the wilderness, went as God had bade them, down into Egypt and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. Then they went to Pharaoh and asked him to let the Hebrews go. They told him that God had sent them to ask him to let them go.

Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

You see the Egyptians did not know God. They worshipped idols and images made of wood or brass or gold.

Then Moses asked Pharaoh to let the Israelites go just a little way out of Egypt where they might make burnt offerings to God and worship

him in their own way. But Pharaoh would not listen. Instead, he called his taskmasters and told them to lay even heavier burdens upon the Israelites, to give them still harder work to do, and that they must go out into the fields and gather straw to make bricks with, where before it had been given them, and that in spite of this they must make just as many bricks as before or they would be beaten.

For a long, long time Moses and Aaron tried in every possible way to get Pharaoh to let the Children of Israel go and he would not. Finally God sent a plague upon all Egypt. Their crops were all spoiled by great swarms of locusts which ate them up, their camels and sheep and goats died by the hundreds and then the people began to die.

Finally Pharaoh made up his mind that God was angry because he had made slaves of the Israelites and would not let them go, so he sent word to Moses to come and get his people and take them away. He was so frightened that he rose up in the night and sent for Moses and

Aaron to come. All the Egyptian people were frightened and were crying to Pharaoh to get these Israelites out of the land for they believed God was cursing them because they had been cruel to the Hebrews.

So Moses came and told the Israelites to get ready at once to march out of the land of bondage. Some of the women had bread set ready for baking the next day, but they could not wait. They bound the bread up with cloths in the kneading troughs and carried it upon their shoulders.

Then they set out upon their long journey, men, women and children, some driving goats and some cattle, each one carrying all he could, for they were never coming back. There were about six hundred thousand of them that walked, besides the children. When they were tired and hungry they stopped by the roadside and baked the bread that they had brought in the dough, for they had not had time to prepare anything to eat.

Moses carried with him the bones of Joseph, for Joseph had told the Israelites that some day God would take them back to Canaan, and he had

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made them promise to take his bones back with them. God was with them all the way, and the Hebrew stories say that he sent a pillar of cloud to show them the way by day, and that at night this pillar of cloud turned into a pillar of fire to give them light, and the angel of the Lord was in this pillar of cloud.

When the last of the Israelites had gone out of Egypt Pharaoh began to be sorry he had let them go, for they were valuable to him as slaves, and he decided to take his armies and follow and bring them back.

The Israelites had gone into camp at a place near the Red Sea. All of a sudden they looked up and saw the Egyptians coming toward them, a great and wonderful army with many chariots, driving wildly over the plain, and with armed men riding on horseback.

The Israelites were dreadfully frightened, for they feared being killed, and they blamed Moses for bringing them, saying they would rather have stayed in Egypt as slaves than to have been brought out into this wilderness to be killed.

Moses, the Deliverer

Moses told them not to fear, but to trust him and stand still and they would see that God would take care of them as He had promised.

They were right at the edge of the Red Sea when the Egyptians were almost upon them, but God told Moses to lift up his rod over the waters of the Red Sea and it would divide so the children might pass over it on dry ground.

All this time, the Bible says, the angel of the Lord was going before the camp of the Israelites in a pillar of cloud, but now He went behind them that He might protect them from the Egyptians. And the pillar of cloud which God had sent to lead the Israelites rose up between the Egyptians and the camp of the Israelites so the Egyptians could not see the Israelites. And the Egyptians could not come near them all the night.

Then Moses stretched his rod out over the Red Sea as God had commanded him, and God caused a strong east wind to blow all that night so that the waters were divided and there was dry land in the morning for the Israelites to cross upon.

When the Egyptians saw the Israelites cross-

ing on dry land they went in after them, all Pharaoh's horses and his chariots and his horsemen, and then God sent the waters rolling back and all the horses and horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh's army were drowned.

HOW GOD FED THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS

Exodus XVI

WHEN the Israelites saw that God had delivered them from the Egyptians they were glad and they thanked God and made a song to Him. It began this way:

“I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea: His chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea.”

It is quite a long song and full of splendid war music, and some day you will read it all from the Bible.

For many years after this Moses and the Israelites wandered in the wilderness and the Bible has a great many wonderful stories of this jour-

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

ney which you will like to read as you grow older.

About two months after they had left Egypt, while they were wandering about in the wilderness, the Israelites again became dissatisfied and complained to Moses. They could not find anything to eat and they told Moses they had rather have died as slaves in Egypt where there was always plenty of bread than to have come out into the wilderness to die of hunger.

Moses chided the Children of Israel and told them that they were doubting God and that if they would only trust Him God would always care for them. God heard their murmurings, and He appeared to Moses in a beautiful, glorious cloud and said: "I have heard the murmurings of the Children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, thy God."

That night when all the birds and wild things of the wilderness were seeking a place for rest and sleep the quails came up in such quantities that they covered the camp, and the Israelites

How God Fed the Israelites in the Wilderness

were able to kill great quantities of them, as many as they cared to, for food. And in the morning they found manna upon the ground, and manna was a kind of fruit which served the purpose of bread. So God's word was fulfilled as it always is.

Another time while the Children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness they came to a place where there was no water to drink and again they were angry at Moses and said, "Give us water, that we may drink; wherefore hast thou brought us up out of the land of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

Moses cried to God and said, "Oh what shall I do unto these people? They be almost ready to stone me?"

God told him to take the elders of his people, that is, the leaders under him, and his rod, the same rod with which he had caused the Red Sea to roll back, and go to a rock that stood by the mountain in Horeb. "And I will stand before thee upon the rock," said God to Moses, "and thou shalt strike the rock with thy rod and

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there shall water come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did this and all the elders saw him smite the rock with his rod and the water gushed forth so that the people might drink, and then they believed that God was with them taking care of them.

THE GOLDEN CALF AND THE TABLETS OF STONE

Exodus XIX; XX; XXXII

IN their wanderings the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sinai where was a mountain called Mt. Sinai and they camped before the mountain.

The Bible stories say that Moses went up into the mountain to pray and that God called to him there. He told Moses to say to all the Israelites that He had brought them out of bondage and saved them from starving by giving them quail to eat and manna to feed upon, and that now He wanted them to obey Him in all things. He told Moses that if they did so He would make them a great nation upon the earth. He also told Moses that He would give them some laws which they must obey. These laws are the same.

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ten commandments which we learn today and which God wants us to obey just as He did the Children of Israel.

The old Hebrew stories say that God gave the ten commandments to Moses written upon tablets of stone, and that Moses brought them down from the mountain in his hand. Whether they were written upon stone tablets or not does not matter to us, but it does matter that we should obey them.

There were a great many other laws that Moses gave the people but these you must read later when you come to all these wonderful and beautiful stories in the Bible itself.

While Moses was up in Mt. Sinai praying and talking with God the people forgot all he had taught them about the true God and wanted a god they could see to pray to, as they had learned of the Egyptians.

They begged Aaron to make them a god of some kind to whom they could pray and Aaron told them to bring him some gold and he would. So the women brought all their gold earrings and

The Golden Calf and the Tablets of Stone

jewels to him and he melted them up and made them into a golden calf. Then these foolish people bowed down and worshipped this golden calf, and made songs to it and believed that it could answer their prayers.

Can you imagine anything so absurd? But you must always remember that they had been living in a land where the people worshipped such things and prayed to them and that they had not yet been long enough with Moses to learn very much better.

When Moses came down from the mountain, the Hebrew stories say he had in his hand the two stone tablets on which were written the laws that God had given him for the people, and when he found his people dancing around a golden calf and worshipping it he was so astonished and disappointed that he threw the stone tablets upon the ground and broke them.

Then he talked to the people and told them how foolish they were, that the golden calf could neither hear nor answer them, but the true God who had delivered them out of bondage and fed

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

them in the wilderness, would always hear them and answer their prayers, if they obeyed Him. After a while Moses went back up into the mountain and asked God to forgive them, telling Him that his poor foolish people didn't know any better and that he believed they would not do so any more; and God forgave them just as He always does, because He loves all His people no matter how foolish and wicked they may be. Then Moses came down again with two other stone tablets that were not broken, and these he set up before the people for them to obey. He told the people that they ought to build a beautiful place to keep the Ten Commandments in and so they did. The women brought all their jewels and gold and fine cloth to Moses and they built a beautiful Tabernacle and Moses made Aaron the High Priest of it, to whom the people brought all their offerings for sacrifice unto God; and everywhere they went, throughout all their journeyings the Israelites carried the Tabernacle with them.



THE PROMISED LAND

Dueteronomy III; XXXII:44-52

ALL this time you know, Moses had been telling the Israelites about the land he was trying to take them to, the land their fathers had come from, the Land of Canaan from where their forefather Jacob or Israel had come. And he told them so much about what he believed the beautiful land to be like that they called it The Promised Land. It was so many years ago, you know, since the first Israelites had come from Canaan with Jacob and his sons to live with Joseph in Egypt, that most of the present tribes had been born since, and almost none of them remembered the land of their forefathers.

A great many wonderful things happened to the Israelites in their wanderings about through the wilderness which was about forty years, and these you will read in the Bible itself, but now we

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will only tell about what the people did when finally they came to the Promised Land.

When they came near the Land of Canaan, for which they had been searching all these forty years, Moses called all the people together and taught them many things. He told them that in this new land where they were going they must never make any more golden calves or any other such idols to worship and that they must pray only to the true God; and he told them in what part of Canaan each tribe should live, for you know there were so many of these Israelites that they were divided into twelve tribes or parties, each living by themselves in their tents and each tribe under a ruler of its own.

Of course there were other people living in this land of Canaan. The Israelites did not know what kind of people these might be so Moses sent some men into the country to look about and to come back and tell him. The men went and when they returned they said it was a most beautiful land "flowing with milk and honey" which meant that there was plenty to eat and drink;

The Promised Land

but, they said, there were some very large men living there, men who were almost as large as giants, and when they said that the Israelites were afraid and did not want to go on for fear these giants would come out and fight with them. There were two men, however, who were braver than the others. Their names were Joshua and Caleb, and they said that they believed with God's help they could march into the land of Canaan and fight their way through so they could make homes for themselves to live in.

Now, of course, by this time Moses was getting to be a very old man, over one hundred years of age, and he knew that he could not lead the Israelites very much longer. When he saw that Joshua was a brave man he made him leader of the Israelites and told Joshua to lead them on into Canaan.

Then Moses talked to the people for the last time. He read the Ten Commandments to them and begged them to be good and not to worship golden calves or other idols and to try to obey the laws which he had given them. Then he went up all alone into a lonely mountain called Nebo

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where he could look out upon the Promised Land, and there, the stories say, Moses died and no one ever knew where he was buried.



JOSHUA, THE WARRIOR

Joshua I; V

WHEN Moses had died, God spoke to Joshua, the brave warrior who had gone into the land of the Philistines to see what was there and said: "Moses, my servant, is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the Children of Israel."

He told Joshua that as He had been with Moses so He would be with him. "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee," He said. "Only be strong and very courageous," God told Joshua, "be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

So Joshua was filled with courage and he called the officers to him and told them to command the people to prepare quantities of victuals, for

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

within three days they were going to pass over the Jordan River which lay between them and the Promised Land, and take possession of the land which God had given them.

The people were ready to obey Joshua for they saw that he was brave and courageous, and they said, "As we obeyed Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord thy God be with thee as He was with Moses." They told him that any man who rebelled against his commands should be put to death, and they said to him, "Be strong and of good courage."

So Joshua put on his armor, breastplate and helmet of brass, and all the people followed him to the Jordan. When they had reached the River Jordan they found that it had overflowed all its banks and there seemed no way to cross. But Joshua told the priests to take the ark which held the covenant of God in their hands and go and step into the river and that when they did so the waters would part and they could all pass over on dry land.

The priests did as they were told and when

Joshua, the Warrior

they came to the river with the ark in their hands and stepped into the waters, sure enough, says the story, the waters parted and all the Israelites passed over on dry land. When they were all safely over the waters returned and overflowed their banks again, and all the people were afraid Joshua as they had been of Moses when he made the Red Sea to part its waters so they could pass over dry shod.

One day Joshua stood by the walls of Jericho, a city with a high wall around it. There was a great army inside that wall and Joshua wanted them to come out and fight, but they would not and no one could get in, so Joshua stood there wondering how he could get them to fight. Of a sudden he looked up and there was a man standing near him with a drawn sword, and the man had not been there a moment before, so Joshua knew he must be an angel. Joshua went up to him and said, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?"

The man answered, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Then Joshua

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fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, for he knew it was an angel of God. He said to the angel, "What saith my lord to his servant?" And the angel said, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And Joshua did so.

Then the angel of the Lord told Joshua that God wanted him to have the city of Jericho and he told Joshua how to take it. This is what happened. Early the next morning seven priests in long flowing robes, each carrying a trumpet made of a ram's horn, marched slowly up to the walls of the city. Behind them came men bearing the ark, and behind these came all the army, their brass helmets and breastplates sparkling in the morning sun and their spears shining. They marched very quietly until the priests were right before the gates of the city, Then the priests gave a long clear blast upon their trumpets. The soldiers spoke not a word nor made a sound, and then they all marched quietly back to their tents. The next day and the next they did the same thing, until for six days they had marched silently

Joshua, the Warrior

around the walls of Jericho. On the seventh day just as the priests blew upon their trumpets all the soldiers gave a great shout and the walls of the city fell. Then Joshua's soldiers rushed in and made all the people prisoners.

THE MOTHER WHO TALKED WITH ANGELS

Judges XIII:1-8

THERE are many beautiful stories in the Bible about people who talked with the angels. You remember how the angels came to Abraham when he was sitting in the door of his tent one hot day, to tell him of the little son who would come to him and Sarah, do you not?

Now we have the story of an angel who came to tell an Israelite mother that a child would come to her. He told her that she should have a little child and that she must drink no wine nor strong drink nor eat anything that was not good and wholesome, so she might have a strong and beautiful child, for that child, the angel told her, should be a child of God and should be a great man and help to deliver the Israelites out of the hand of the Philistines.





The Mother Who Talked with Angels

The woman was very glad and she went and told her husband, whose name was Manoah, what the angel had said to her. "A man of God came to me," she said, "and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God. And he said, 'Drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing, for the sake of the child.' " And the little child came and they called him Samson, meaning strength.

SAMSON, THE MIGHTY

Judges XVI:1-31

THE Israelites, as we have said, had to fight many battles with the people who lived in the Land of Canaan, but the worst battles of all were fought with the Philistines, a tribe of people who lived along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. These people were always fighting and were stronger than the Israelites. Now the child who was named Samson had grown to be a man and he was a great fighter and very strong. The Bible tells many wonderful stories of what Samson, in his great strength did. One of them is that he took the jaw bone of an ass and went out and rushed upon an army of Philistines and slashed at them right and left until he had slain a thousand men.

Another story says that Samson went one time

Samson, the Mighty

to a town called Gaza and the Philistines said that when he was asleep they would capture him. But Samson rose up in the night and took off the gates of the city and the posts with them and put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill.

Samson loved a Philistine woman named Delilah, and the Philistines told Delilah to find out in some way what made Samson so strong and in what part of his body his great strength lay, for they were afraid of him and thought if they could find out where his strength lay they might take it away from him. So Delilah asked him: "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth," and she asked him what could be done to him that would take away his strength, but Samson for a long time would not tell her.

Now if Delilah had been a good woman she would not have tried to coax Samson to tell her the secret of his strength so she could tell the Philistines, but she was not a good woman. She kept on asking and asking Samson and finally he told her that his great strength lay in his hair

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and that if his hair should be cut off he would not then be stronger than any other man. When he was asleep one time, Delilah, wicked Delilah, cut off all his hair. Then she sent for the Philistines and they came and took him and put out his eyes and brought him down to the city of Gaza and bound him with fetters of grass. And then the Philistines, because they were so glad to have made a prisoner of the mighty Samson, had a great feast, and while they were singing and laughing at the feast some one said, "Let us send for Samson and make sport of him." So they did and the blind Samson was led in. Samson said to the lad that was leading him, "Let me feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them."

Now the house was full of men and women and all the lords of Philistia were there, and there were above three thousand men and women looking to see Samson make sport for them. Then Samson prayed to God and begged Him to give him his great strength just once more so he could punish the Philistines for having put out his eyes

Samson, the Mighty

and made him blind. And God did. Samson pushed at the pillars upon which the house stood and the house came down and killed all the people that were in it and Samson with them.

RUTH

Ruth I: II: III: IV

IN the Land of Canaan there lived a woman named Naomi who had two sons. Her husband died and the two sons married. One of them married a girl named Ruth. Finally both of Naomi's sons died and there came a famine in the land and there was no bread to eat.

Naomi thought she would go into another land called Bethlehem where there was bread. She told her two daughters-in-law that they had better return to their mothers' homes where there was plenty to eat, and she asked God to be good to them on their journey even as they had been good to her sons and her. She kissed them and both of her daughters-in-law wept, for they loved Naomi, their husbands' mother, very much and they did not like to think of her taking this long

Ruth

journey without them. They were sorry for her and told her they did not want to leave her.

But Naomi told them that she was going to travel a long way and she could do nothing for them. "I am an old woman," she said, "and I can not help you. You had better go back to the land of your own mothers." Opah kissed her mother-in-law with tears in her eyes and went away to her mother's home, but Ruth would not go. Naomi said, "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her own people. Return thou after her." But Ruth loved Naomi and was sorry for her, and she said, "Entreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and whither thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. I will not leave thee nor foresake thee."

So when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined not to leave her she no longer urged her, and they went together a long, long journey of many weary miles to the little town of Bethlehem. It must have been a very hot and tiresome walk and they had often to stop and rest by the way.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

It was the time of barley harvest when they got to Bethlehem and all the people were in the fields, the men reaping the grain and women following after, gleaning.

There was a man, a kinsman of Naomi, named Boaz, who was very rich, and he had a great field of barley which they called corn. There were many men in the field cutting down the barley with sickles and women and men were gathering it in their arms into bundles.

It was the custom of that land to let the poor people follow after the gleaners in the field and gather up the corn that was left. Ruth asked Naomi to let her go into the field and glean that they might have bread, and Naomi said, "Go, my daughter." So Ruth went out into the field and followed after the gleaners, gathering the barley that was dropped, while Naomi staid in the little house where they went to live.

When Boaz, the rich owner of the fields came to where the men were gleaning he said, "The Lord be with you." And they all looked up from their work and answered, "The Lord bless thee," which





Ruth

was their form of greeting. Then Boaz saw Ruth and asked the reapers who she was. They told him it was the maiden who had come home with Naomi to live, and that she had asked them to let her glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.

Boaz was very kind and told Ruth to stay in his fields all the time and not go to other fields. He told his reapers to let some barley fall on purpose for her, and he told Ruth when she was thirsty to go and drink from the water jug that belonged to his gleaners and to come and eat with them. Ruth was glad and thankful and asked him why he was so good to her. He said it was because she had left her own home and people where food was plenty to come and live with Naomi who was lonely and old and poor.

Ruth gleaned in the fields all day and when she went home at night Naomi was surprised to see how large a sheaf of barley she had and asked her where she had been. Ruth told her that she had been in the fields of their rich kinsman, Boaz,

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and Naomi thanked God that they had found so kind a friend.

Afterward Boaz made Ruth his wife and she no longer had to glean barley from the fields. They had a little child and Naomi was so very, very glad that she took all the care of it and nursed it and all the women told her how blessed she had been in having a daughter-in-law like Ruth, "Who loveth thee," they said, "and who is better to thee than seven sons." And they told her what a comfort the baby would be to her in her old age. The baby grew to be a man and was the great-grandfather of David who killed the giant, Goliath, and who was afterward a great king.

SAMUEL, THE LITTLE PROPHET

I Samuel 2; 3; 4

A PROPHET, you know, was one who spoke to the people for God telling God's message for them. Here is the story of a little boy who was a prophet, one whom God chose to help Him in His work.

Among the Hebrew women was one whose name was Hannah and Hannah had no little children. Her heart was very sad and lonely because of this and she looked with longing eyes at the mothers who had little children sitting on their laps and playing about them. Hannah put her face in her hands and wept and prayed to God, telling him how very sorrowful and lonely she was. She said to God that if he would give her a little son she would give him back to God and let him work for Him all the days of his life. And God heard

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Hannah's prayer and gave her a child, a little boy, and she called his name Samuel.

So Hannah was very, very glad and she told Samuel's father what she had promised and he told her to do whatever seemed good. Hannah took care of the little boy until he was old enough to go away from home and then she took him up to the Tabernacle where was the beautiful ark in which were the stones upon which the Ten Commandments were written, and said to the High Priest, Eli, who took care of the Temple, that she had brought her little son Samuel, to loan him to the Lord as long as he lived. For she knew that in the Temple Samuel would have work to do in caring for the things that were God's, and that Eli would teach him to be a good and useful man.

Hannah was so glad and thankful that she had this little son to give to God that she made a beautiful song all about how proud and glad she was and what wonderful things Samuel would do.

She went up to the Tabernacle every year to see little Samuel and each time she took him a

Samuel, the Little Prophet

coat that she had made for him herself. We can imagine how very proud and thankful she must have been to see him growing to be a good boy and obedient to what he knew God wanted him to do, and if sometimes her heart was lonely for the little boy that she would have liked to keep with her she was always glad that she had had him to give to God.

Of course little Samuel must have been lonely at first in the strange Temple with no one but the good old priest Eli, but Eli was always kind to him and loved him. He loved him all the more because his own sons were wicked men and would not do as he wanted them to nor listen to the voice of God.

One night when Samuel and Eli had both laid down to sleep the little boy suddenly thought he heard some one calling him and he started up and ran in to Eli and said, "Here am I." For he thought Eli had called him. But Eli said, "I called not; lie down again." And Samuel went back and laid down.

Presently, however, he heard the voice again

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calling, "Samuel!" And Samuel went a second time to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." But Eli answered, "I called not, my son. Lie down again."

But the voice called Samuel a third time and when Samuel came to Eli a third time saying he had been called, Eli thought it must be the voice of God calling Samuel; so he told Samuel to go and lie down again but if he heard the voice again to answer and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

The voice did call again and Samuel answered as Eli had told him. Then he thought he heard the voice telling him that God would judge Eli and Eli's house because his sons were wicked.

In the morning Samuel went about his duties as usual and was almost afraid to tell Eli what he had heard. By and by, however, Eli called Samuel to him and asked him what the Lord had said; so Samuel told him and Eli said, "It is the Lord! Let him do what seemeth to Him good." After this, when Samuel grew up he was called a prophet because he could tell people the things

Samuel, the Little Prophet

that were going to happen to them, and the people believed that God spoke directly to him. The Israelites often came to ask Samuel what was going to happen to them and what they should do.

One time when Samuel had grown to be a man and Eli was very old, almost a hundred years old, there was a great battle between the Philistines and Israelites, and the Israelites were beaten. When the Israelites came together at night in their tents after the battle, those of them that were not killed, the elders said, "Let us fetch the ark of the Lord out of Shiloh to us, that when it cometh among us it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."

So they sent to Shiloh for the ark and when it was brought they rejoiced and sang and shouted because they thought now that the ark was with them the Philistines could not harm them. And Eli's three sons, Eli, Hophni and Phineas were with them.

When the Philistines heard the Israelites shouting and singing and rejoicing in their camp they questioned among themselves and said, "What

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meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?" And when they understood that the ark of the Lord had been brought into the camp of the Hebrews they were afraid and said, "Woe unto us!" Then the captains said to their men, "Be strong and quit yourselves like men or the Hebrews will conquer you and make slaves of you. Quit yourselves like men and fight!" Then the Philistines fought and Israel was beaten again and the ark was taken away from them by the Philistines and thirty thousand Hebrews were slain. The Israelites were afraid for their lives and fled to their tents. And amongst those that were killed were Eli's two sons.

Eli, the old priest was sitting by the gates of the temple all during the battle, trembling for fear the Philistines would take the ark and waiting for news of the battle. After the fight was over a man went running from the battle ground to the city which was some distance away. His clothes were all torn and earth was upon his head, which was a sign that he was a bearer of bad news.

Samuel, the Little Prophet

When he came to the city where Eli waited by the gates and told the news of the battle and of the taking of the ark which held the covenant, all the city cried out. When Eli heard the noise of the crying he said, "What meaneth the noise of this tumult?" And the man came running to him and told him. Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were dim and he could not see, and when the messenger told him that two of his sons were killed in the battle and the ark of God taken by the Philistines, Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck broke and he died. Eli had been a judge of Israel for forty years.

After Eli died Samuel was chosen to be judge of Israel and he taught the people how to be good and to live right for many years. Samuel was always obedient to the voice of God speaking in his heart and as he had lived in the Temple of the Lord when he was a child, so he lived with God all his life and was ever ready to answer, just as he had when a little child, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

KING SAUL

I Samuel XII:1-5; XV:24-35

WHILE Samuel was still alive and judge over Israel the Israelites wanted him to choose a king to rule over them as the people of other countries had. Samuel tried to show them that they would not be so well off with a king as they had been with a judge to rule them, and that a king would take their sons away to drive his chariots and take care of his horses, and their daughters to be his servants; he would take away their vineyards and fields and a great many of their sheep.

But the people would not listen to him and insisted that Samuel should choose a king who would lead them in their battles. So finally Samuel chose a man called Saul and anointed him with oil and told him he was chosen king of the Israelites.

Saul was a great man in stature, taller than any other man and very strong, and Samuel

King Saul

brought Saul before the people and showed them the man whom he had chosen to be their king and said: "Behold! this is the king chosen for you." And the people were proud of their new king and were glad.

Saul remained king of Israel for a great many years and led his people into many battles, but he did not always listen for the voice of God nor to Samuel's warnings and this brought him into much trouble. Samuel listened always for God's voice and he told Saul when he thought he was doing wrong, but Saul would not listen and there were a great many bitter fights between the Children of Israel and the Philistines. Finally Saul went to Samuel and told him he was afraid he and his people had offended God. He asked Samuel if he thought God would forgive him if he offered Him a sacrifice. Then Samuel said one of the most beautiful and truest things that ever was said:

"Hath the Lord so great delight," he said, "in burnt offerings as in obedience? Behold, it is better to obey than to sacrifice."

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Saul knew he had done wrong and was sorry and begged Samuel to forgive him. But nevertheless he kept on doing things that were wrong until his conscience troubled him very much. He grew very sorrowful and melancholy at times and would sit for hours and hours without speaking or laughing. His servants and his son Jonathan and all the members of his household tried everything they could think of to cure him. They tried medicines and they sent for witches (which people in those days believed in), but nothing did any good. Finally one of his men bethought him of a way the priests in another country had of curing people whose hearts were heavy or whose minds were troubled by what they had done. This was to bring in players on different instruments of music, harps and horns and reed instruments, also singers of sweet songs. So they sent out to all the surrounding country for the players of instruments and singers of songs to come and play and sing to Saul when he was unhappy.

DAVID, THE SHEPHERD'S BOY

I Samuel XVI:1-14

FINALLY Samuel would not go to Saul any more or try to tell him what he ought to do, but he mourned and mourned for him because he knew that the king was doing wrong.

You remember how, ever since Samuel was a little boy God had spoken to him, so now He told Samuel not to mourn for Saul any longer, but to go down into Bethlehem where lived a man named Jesse who had many sons, for God had chosen one of these sons to be king after Saul. And God told Samuel to take a cruse of oil with him to anoint the chosen one; for it was a custom of their land to anoint with oil any one who was chosen to work for the Lord or to be king. Samuel said, "How can I? For if Saul hear it he will kill me." But God told Samuel He would take care of him and that he was to go.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

So the white haired old prophet immediately obeyed as he always had. He wrapped his long, loose garments such as prophets wore about him, took a queer looking and oddly shapen horn in which was the oil that priests used in anointing those whom the Lord had chosen, went down into Bethlehem and came to the house of Jesse who was a shepherd. When he had told his errand Jesse called his sons, seven big, stalwart fellows, and they stood before Samuel. When Samuel saw one of them who was taller and sturdier than the others he said, "Surely this is the one the Lord hath chosen." But the Lord told Samuel not to choose this one and that he must never judge a man by his outward appearance for God never did. "Man," said the Lord, "looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Then, one by one, they all passed before Samuel, but the voice of God did not tell Samuel that any of these was the chosen one, so Samuel said unto Jesse, "The Lord hath not chosen these," and he asked, "are here *all* thy children?"

David, The Shepherd Boy

Jesse said, "There remaineth but the youngest, and behold he keepeth the sheep." For Jesse could not believe that it was the youngest of all his sons that was chosen. But Samuel told Jesse to send for this youngest son and Jesse did.

Then David came in from the fields where he had been with the sheep, wondering no doubt who could have sent for him and feeling a little bit awed and shy at sight of the old white haired priest who was waiting for him. David was ruddy and fair and beautiful to look at and Samuel's old heart warmed at sight of the youth and he knew at once that here was the one chosen of the Lord.

Immediately when David came in the Lord spoke to Samuel and said, "Arise and anoint him: for this is he." So Samuel took the horn of oil which he had brought with him and anointed him there before his seven brothers and his father, and the spirit of the Lord came upon David and he knew that he was chosen to do a great work.

DAVID, THE HARPIST

I Samuel XVI:14-23

YOU will remember how troubled and miserable King Saul was at this time because he was afraid he had done so many wicked things that God would not forgive him? And you remember that his men and his son Jonathan, who was a fine young prince of about the same age as David, had been sending out through the country for singers and musicians to come and play and sing to him, thinking this would ease his mind and make him happy?

Well, one day one of his servants told Saul that he had heard of a young man, a shepherd boy, youngest son of a farmer in Bethlehem, named Jesse, who was a very fine harpist, and Saul commanded them to go at once to Jesse and get this young man harpist and bring him back.

You can imagine that Jesse and David and all the other brothers must have been very much surprised to have this message from the king.

David, the Harpist

They were probably excited, too, over so great an event as David's going to the palace to play before the king. Jesse was very likely anxious and not a little worried too, for he knew that the prophet Samuel's visit and the anointing of David had meant that David must do whatever the Lord would call him to do. He was afraid that Saul might have heard of Samuel's visit and the choosing of David, and that some danger might threaten his youngest son.

But nevertheless, he knew David must obey the summons of the king, so he loaded an ass with presents of bread and wine and meat for the king and sent them to the king by David.

You will remember that David was straight and slender, fair haired, and ruddy cheeked, with splendid round limbs and clear, honest eyes. He was quite probably a bit excited when he went in to play before the sick king. No doubt his cheeks were flushed and his eyes sparkled. But he stood his harp up before the king and began to play, and straightway the king felt better. David, you know, had lived all his

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

boy life out upon the fields and hills taking care of sheep, sleeping at night beneath the starry sky and waking early in the morning while the dew still sparkled in the grass.

He had had to be very brave and unafraid because there were wild beasts in the forests and amongst the rocks and caves of the mountains, and he had had to fight off lions and other animals, and sometimes to rescue little lambs from them.

His music, therefore, would be very sweet, full of bird calls and the sound of little brooks curling over stones, of the wind whispering at night through the forest, and of rain pattering on leaves; and also it would have in it chords of courage and strength. At any rate, there was some wonderful soothing power in David's music which drove the bad thoughts out of Saul's mind and made him well. Then Saul loved David greatly and said he should be his armour-bearer. And when Saul was quite well again, David went back to his father's farm in Bethlehem and to the care of the sheep.

DAVID AND GOLIATH

I Samuel XVII

YOU remember we said that the Philistines were great fighters. There are many Hebrew stories about the wonderful things they did and how large and powerful their men were.

Among them was one more powerful, taller and stronger than any other and more of a fighter. His name was Goliath, and he was such a giant that every one was afraid of him.

Goliath wore upon his head a helmet of brass and upon his body a coat of mail, a garment made of brass which weighed ever so many pounds. Upon his legs he wore greaves of brass which were like leggings, and a breast plate of brass between his shoulders. He carried an enormous spear with a great iron head upon it, and another man went before him carrying a shield to keep him from being struck by the arrows of his enemies.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

No one had ever been able to harm this great giant with all his armour of metal, and of course Saul and all the armies of the Israelites were terribly afraid of him, for he came to their camp day after day and dared them to come out and fight him. He told them to choose any man amongst them to fight against him and if the Israelite could kill him the Philistines would be the slaves of the Israelites, but if he should kill the Israelite then the Israelites must be the slaves of the Philistines.

Of course no one dared to fight against him for they were sure their man would be killed, and the Israelites did not want to become the slaves of the Philistines.

Now you will remember that David who had been anointed by Samuel and who had been sent for to play before the king, had seven brothers. Three of these, the three eldest, went into Saul's armies and fought against the Philistines, but the rest of them staid at home, and David took care of the sheep just the same as he had before he went to the palace to play for the king.

David and Goliath

One day David's father told him to take some loaves of bread and some parched corn for his brothers, and some cheese for the captain, and to go out to where the armies were and see how his brothers were and then to come back and tell him.

David arrived at the battlefield just as the Israelites were preparing for battle with the Philistines. He left his servants with the presents his father had sent at the outskirts of the battle ground. Then he ran down to where the soldiers were. He easily found his brothers and talked with them while they were waiting for the battle to begin. He could hear all about him the shoutings and war cries of the different tribes. He could see their banners waving and doubtless his blood ran swift with excitement.

While he was talking with them he saw a most appalling sight. Over in Philistine, the country just across a little river against which the Israelites were fighting, was suddenly a great shouting, a running about of soldiers, waving of banners and glint of spears in the sun.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

David looked and thought he saw a man being borne aloft on something. He looked again and saw that it was a man taller and larger than all the other men about him, larger even than the big strong man who carried the shield before him, towering away over all the others and covered with a coat of mail, iron greaves upon his legs, and a big brass helmet which shone in the sun upon his head. David was amazed, and turning to his brothers asked them who it was.

The Israelites when they saw this terrible sight were all frightened and began to run away. David's brothers said: "It is the giant Goliath, David. It is the dreaded giant." They told him how the giant threatened Israel and dared them to come and fight and how none dared fight him. They told him also that if any man would kill Goliath, to him Saul would give great riches, land, flocks and camels, and also his daughter for a wife.

Then David, the shepherd boy who had not been afraid to sleep on the mountain sides alone with his sheep, where were lions and wild beasts of

David and Goliath

all sorts; David, who had been anointed by the prophet Samuel as a servant of the Lord, spoke to them about him and asked them to tell him again what would be done to the man who should kill the giant.

“What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine,” he said, “and taketh away the reproach from Israel?” For to him it seemed as if the men of Saul’s armies had shown cowardice in being afraid of the giant.

His brothers, who stood near, were angry at his seeming blame of Israel, and one of them, Eliab, spoke sharply to him and said:

“Why camest thou down hither, and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.”

But David answered him very quietly. “What have I done now? Is there not a cause?”

There was something so strange about his face, something so deep and calm about his voice that his brothers were almost afraid. They re-

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

membered the solemn day on their father's farm when the old white-haired prophet had anointed the kneeling David and said that he was set apart and called by God to do some great and wonderful work, and they drew back and said no more to him.

Then David turned to the men about him and asked them questions until they saw that he was thinking of going into battle with the Philistine himself. Some of them ran and told King Saul, who was able to lead his armies once more, what the shepherd boy had said and Saul sent for David.

When David came before Saul he looked so slender, so bright and young that Saul felt tender toward him in his heart and could not think of David's putting himself in the way of this dreadful giant, although he did not recognize him as the same shepherd boy who had played music to him when he was ill. But David was very brave and fearless, for he felt sure that God was with him.

"Let no man's heart fail because of the giant,"

David and Goliath

he said, "thy servant will go and fight the Philistine."

"But," said Saul, "thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for thou art but a youth and he a man of war from his youth up."

Then David told Saul that he had kept his father's sheep and that once a lion and once a bear had come and taken a lamb out of the flock and that he had killed them both. And he said: "The Lord that hath delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear will deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Then Saul put his armour on David, for in those days when men went out to battle they covered themselves with clothing of metal through which no arrows could pierce. Saul put his helmet on David's head and gave him his sword. But when David tried to move he found the armour so heavy he could not walk and he did not know how to handle it, so he took it all off

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

saying to Saul, "I can not go with these on, for I have not tried them."

You can imagine what great excitement there must have been in the two armies. On one side were the Philistines all shouting, laughing and mocking at the Israelites because they dared not fight the champion of Philistia. There was their great giant himself striding back and forth, his helmet and brass and steel all shining and gleaming in the sunlight until he looked like a giant iron man whom nothing could touch or harm.

And the giant waved his iron spear and shouted at the Israelites as he had been shouting for days. "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am I not a Philistine and ye servants of Saul? Choose you a man for you and let him come down to me. If he be able to kill me then we will be your servants, but if I kill him then shall ye be our servants and serve us." And he shouted, "I defy the armies of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together." And all the Philistines shouted and mocked and jeered at Israel, waving their banners and spears and

David and Goliath

sounding their terrible war cry until the blood of the Israelites ran cold and they shivered.

Then, from out of the ranks of the Israelite soldiers came a man and he went toward the giant. He was young and slender, but a very boy in size. He wore no armour, no helmet upon his head, no brass plate upon his breast, no greaves upon his legs, carried no spear, no sword was in his hand. His breast was bare and his legs naked. Only a cloth was girded about his loins. He held only a shepherd's staff in his hands and a woven sling with five ground pebbles in the bag. His young face was very grave and upon it was a look that made all the soldiers, even King Saul himself, draw back from him as he passed, as if the ground he trod upon were holy ground—as if the spirit of God himself shone from his face.

Saul watched him. Jonathan watched him—all Israel's soldiers watched him and no man spoke. It seemed so hopeless a thing—this stripling lad against yonder armoured giant, and if he failed—if he failed, Philistia would claim them as slaves.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Slowly, steadily, David advanced. Then the Philistines saw him coming and stood still in amazement. What was this naked boy coming toward them for? They could not believe he was coming to fight their champion. They hardly knew whether to laugh or be angry. They thought the Israelites must be making sport of them. Then Goliath saw him and was angry and cursed.

“Am I a dog,” he said, “that thou comest to me with staves? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field.”

David threw back his head and the white light of God grew stronger upon his face, but in the hearts of Saul and Prince Jonathan watching him, and in the hearts of his brothers, was a great fear, for surely he would fail. And there was an awful silence in both armies watching.

Then David drew near a little stream which separated Philistia from Israel, which separated the army of the Philistines from the armies of the Israelites. The stream was almost dry and he stepped from stone to stone, from one dry

David and Goliath

place to another fearlessly, and the silence grew deeper. Even the spear points were motionless in the sun. Every man in both armies said in his heart, "Yea, the giant will kill him and throw his flesh to the beasts and we shall be their slaves." But they stood motionless and watched with fascinated eyes.

Then they heard David answering the giant, his clear, sweet voice ringing out upon the air. "Thou comest to me with a spear," he said, "and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou has defied. This day the Lord will deliver thee into my hand," he cried, "and I will smite thee and take thy head from off thee, and I will give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all may know there is a God in Israel."

He poised himself for an instant and then he flung back his head and cried out, "And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's."

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Then the watching armies saw him spring forward, saw the Philistine with sword and spear rush to meet him, saw the sling in David's hand whizz round and round his head—they heard the giant scream—almost bellow; saw him stagger, whirl—drop! Scattering stones and sand as he fell!

Then, before either army could recover from the shock, David sprang forward and stood upon the huge body of the giant. He took Goliath's own sword from his dead hands and cut off his head, holding it up that all the armies of Israel might see that their foe was dead, and in the forehead was the stone with which David the Shepherd boy had killed him.

Then there were strange cries upon the air. The Israelites rushed forward shouting and cheering, waving their banners and their spears. The Philistines with fear and terror in their hearts because their champion was dead and the Israelites rushing upon them, scattered in confusion and fright. The Israelites chased them for many miles killing and wounding many, but

David and Goliath

finally they turned and came back to the camp of the Philistines where they tore down their tents and took possession of all that had been left.

THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP

I Samuel XVIII; XIX; XX

SAUL, you remember, had not recognized David as the harp player when he saw him go forth to fight Goliath. He had asked the captain of the armies who the youth was, but the captain did not know.

After David had killed the giant, the captain brought him before Saul who asked him whose son he was.

“I am the son of thy servant Jesse, at Bethlehem,” replied David.

While Saul was talking to David his own son Jonathan had been standing near by and Jonathan had felt a great love dawning in his heart for the shepherd boy. Saul was very fond of him too, and very proud of him, and grateful to

The Story of a Beautiful Friendship

him for having slain the Philistine, and he took him into his own house to live. David and Jonathan loved each other very dearly, and Jonathan loved David so much that he took off his own robe and girdle and put them on David, which was the sign of a covenant of most sacred friendship. So David no longer wore shepherd's garments, but rich and beautiful robes such as Jonathan did, and he was treated as a prince of the palace.

Then Saul sent David out as leader of all the battles and David proved himself to be so great a leader that Saul grew jealous of him because the people praised him and were learning to love and trust him. When David came back from a great battle where many of the Philistines had been slain, the women and children came out playing upon musical instruments and threw flowers in his path and made a song for him which was like this:

“Saul hath slain his thousands
And David his tens of thousands.”

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

They said that David was a greater man than Saul. They sang:

“Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his tens of thousands.”

Over and over again they sang:

“Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his tens of thousands.”

This made Saul angry for he was afraid the people would come to love David more than they did him and would want him to be their king. So Saul tried to kill David while he was playing the harp but he could not. Then he was afraid because he thought the Lord was watching over David.

The people loved David more and more because he was kind and wise, and finally Saul determined that David must be killed anyway. So he told Jonathan, his son, and David's dearly loved friend, that David must be killed. But Jonathan

The Story of a Beautiful Friendship

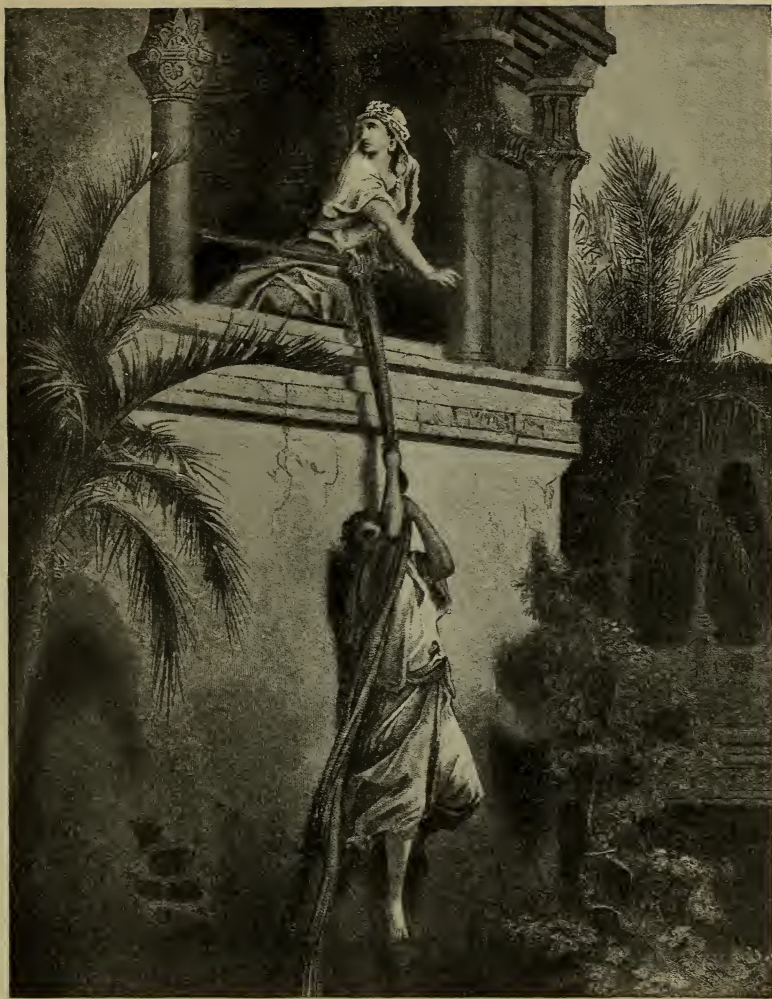
loved David like a brother and could not bear to think of his being killed even though his own father and a king had said it must be so. And you know in those olden days the king had a right to say any one must be killed if he wanted to. So Jonathan went to David and told him that Saul, the king, wanted him killed, and begged him to hide. Then he went to his father and begged him not to kill David, reminding him how David had rid them of the dreadful giant Goliath. He told Saul that David had been a good servant to him, and implored him not to shed David's innocent blood. And Saul promised Jonathan that David should not die. So Jonathan was glad and happy and ran to tell David that his father had promised that he might live.

Then there was another great battle in which David led and in which a great number of Philistines were killed. The people praised him again until Saul forgot his good promise to Jonathan and was angry and jealous and afraid the people would want David for their king. And again he threw a spear and tried to kill David while he was

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playing on his harp and then David ran out into the night. That night David's wife, Michal, who was Saul's daughter, you know, and Jonathan's sister, let him down out of the window by a rope and put an image in the bed with a pillow of goat's hair for a bolster and covered it with a cloth. So David escaped and went away to where Samuel was and told Samuel what Saul had done. After a while he grew so lonely and homesick for Jonathan that he went to Jonathan and asked him if he knew why his father, the king, was so angry with him, David, and why he wanted to kill him. But Jonathan did not know, and he told David that he did not believe that his father would do anything without telling him. David, however, had not so much faith in Saul. He told Jonathan that Saul did not want him, Jonathan, to know anything about it because he would grieve, and that he knew Saul meant to kill him.

You can imagine how sad and sorrowful they must have been for they loved one another dearly, and Jonathan particularly, knowing that his loved friend was in danger and that danger coming



The Story of a Beautiful Friendship

from his own father, and a king, too. But kings sometimes have been very cruel. So Jonathan said to David: "Whatever you want of me I will do even that—for you." And David told Jonathan that he was going away where the king could not find him. He begged Jonathan to be his true friend and to kill him himself rather than let him be killed by his enemies. Jonathan was terribly grieved and told David that he would do anything in his power to help him and to remember that he was David's loved friend and that he should love him no matter what happened. That night David went and hid in a wilderness where were rocks and caves and forests.

The next day after David went away there was a great feast and Saul missed David because he was not there to eat or to play the harp. He asked Jonathan where David was, and Jonathan told Saul that David had gone into Bethlehem. Saul was very angry because David was not there and he was angry at Jonathan also and told him that David must be brought back and slain. Jonathan begged to know what David had done that he must

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

be killed, and that made Saul still more angry and he tried to kill Jonathan, too. Then, indeed, Jonathan knew that his father meant to kill David and he was sorely grieved.

Jonathan went to the secret place where David was hiding and told him that Saul really meant to kill him and that he must run away. They wept and kissed each other, and David went away and lived for many years in a wilderness. Jonathan went there and talked with him and told him not to fear Saul and that one day he would be king over Israel himself and he, Jonathan, should be next to him.

You can understand how very beautiful this was in Jonathan when you remember that he, being the king's son, might have been king himself.

Some day when you are a little older you will turn to this story of one of the most beautiful friendships the world has ever known, and read it in the sweet old Bible words.

Finally, after a great many battles, in some of which Saul fell into the hands of David and found

The Story of a Beautiful Friendship

David only kind to him, and about which you will like to read when you are older, Saul became discouraged and killed himself, and Jonathan was killed by the Philistines on the same day.

When David heard of Jonathan's death he was bitterly grieved, and he wrote a beautiful song about it.

DAVID AND ABIGAIL

I Samuel XXV:1-44

DO you remember the story of Hagar and her little boy Ishmael, and how they wandered in the desert where were only rocks and sandy places, with but now and then a shady spot or bit of water?

Well, in this same rocky desert there lived, at the same time David was hiding in the wilderness from Saul who wanted to kill him, a farmer by the name of Nabal and whose wife's name was Abigail. Nabal was very rich for he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats; but he was of an evil disposition, churlish and bad tempered.

Abigail, his wife, was a woman of good understanding, wise in her dealings and very beautiful to look at.

David and Abigail

Now, it was the custom in that land to gather together in the spring of the year the sheep from all over the hillsides and fields where they had been pasturing, with their shepherds to care for them, and shear them of their wool. You can imagine how they would look coming home to Nabal's shearing place, great flocks of them, this way and that, bleating and pattering along in the dust with their shepherds behind them.

It was also the custom at this shearing season for the farmer to make a great feast, and the farmer's wife to prepare stores of food, bread and wine and meats and fruits for all the shepherds, and at these feasts were singing and dancing and making merry.

Now, you remember that David was in hiding from Saul's jealous anger, and with him were six hundred brave and fearless warriors, and that the wilderness where they were was in the same land where Nabal's sheep had been feeding for many months. From time to time other men had joined David and once a number of the very men whom Saul had sent to capture him staid there and

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

joined David's band of outlaws, for they knew him to be brave and fearless and they loved him.

These young warrior companions of David's had often protected Nabal's sheep from wild beasts and had been of service to the shepherds also, for it was the custom of the farmers and shepherds round about to give gifts and food to the outlaws and in return their flocks were watched over and protected. When David heard of the great feast that was to take place on Nabal's farm he sent ten of his young men to Nabal and bade them say: "Peace be both to thee and to thine house, and peace be to all thou hast." He told them to remind Nabal how they had taken care of his sheep and never harmed or stolen any of them, and to ask him to give them some of the good things from the feast to bring back to their companions in the desert.

So the young warriors went up across the rocky, sandy desert to Nabal's farm and repeated to him David's message. But Nabal was churlish and ill-tempered as always and said, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? There

be many servants nowadays that break away from their masters. Shall I take then from my bread and my water and the meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men whom I know not?"

So David's young men turned and went back to David and told him what Nabal had said. David was angry and he told his young men every one to put on his sword and he put on his sword also. About four hundred of them went marching away across the desert towards Nabal's farm while the other two hundred staid to watch the camp.

Now, one of Nabal's servants, when David's young men turned away to return to David with Nabal's rude message, went to Abigail and told her what had happened, how David's ten warriors had come up with a peaceful greeting and had asked for some of the good things from the feast to take back to their companions in the wilderness, and how churlish Nabal had been to them. He told her that David and his men had always been good to the shepherds and had done many kind things for them and their flocks and

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

that now Nabal had angered them he was certain they would return and perhaps kill even those who were not to blame for Nabal's evil temper. He begged Abigail to consider what could be done, "for," said he, "Nabal is such a son of Belial that a man can not speak to him."

Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two bottles of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched corn and an hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs and laid them on the backs of asses. And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; behold, I will come after you." But she did not tell Nabal where she was going.

All this time David and his four hundred warriors were marching steadily across the desert toward Nabal's farm and the feast. By and by they came to a steep, narrow path that led down into a valley and as they looked they saw a queer procession marching down to meet them on an opposite steep hill, some pack asses or little mules whose backs were laden with something in sacks and with men riding them and a woman riding be-

David and Abigail

hind, alone. She was not afraid, even though she was riding to meet four hundred brave and fearless warriors in a narrow pass, and she had with her but a handful of men.

When Abigail saw David she alighted and fell before him on her face and bowed herself to the ground. She begged him to forgive her for coming to meet him and not to go and kill Nabal and the shepherds, for, she told him, Nabal was but a churl and it would be unworthy such a man as he to avenge himself against a man like Nabal, for surely, she said, the Lord, Himself, would avenge David. She told him that she had known nothing of Nabal's rude treatment of David's men else she would have given them of the feast. She told David that even though an enemy was seeking to take his life the Lord would watch over him and would yet make him a great man and a ruler over Israel and she begged him that when such a time would come he would remember his handmaid, Abigail.

David was pleased with Abigail and blessed her and told her he was glad God had sent her to meet

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him and to prevent him from shedding blood. He took the gifts which she had brought him and said, "Go up in peace to thine house for I have hearkened to thy advice."

Abigail went back to her home and there she found the feast going merrily on and Nabal drunk with wine, so she told him nothing of where she had been until the next morning when the feast was over, and then she told him. When Nabal heard how angry David had been and how he had meant to kill him and all his shepherds his heart turned to stone with fear and in about ten days after that Nabal died.

When David heard that Nabal was dead he thanked God again for having kept him from killing Nabal, "for," said he, "the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head."

After awhile David, remembering Abigail's fearlessness in coming to meet him and his warriors in the narrow, hilly pass, and her kindness in bringing them good things from the feast, sent

David and Abigail

his servants to ask her if she would be his wife, and Abigail took five of her maid servants and they rode upon asses and went to David.

DAVID, THE SHEPHERD KING.

II Samuel I; V:4-6; VI

WHEN David was told that Saul and Jonathan were both killed in a battle with the Philistines he forgot how cruel Saul had been in wanting to kill him, and remembered only how good he had been to him at first and how he had loved him, and he mourned and grieved and would not be comforted. He made a beautiful song about it which you will like to read in the Bible when you grow older.

After a time, during which there was always much fighting with the Philistines, the Israelites chose David to be their king, for they knew he was brave and wise and that he always obeyed the voice of God. When David was thirty years of age he was anointed King of Israel, and he reigned forty years.

David, you remember, had lived at Bethlehem

David, the Shepherd King

with his father Jesse, who was a shepherd, and he had been just a simple shepherd boy tending his father's sheep and playing upon his harp until that wonderful day when the white haired old prophet Samuel had called him in from the hillside to anoint him with oil and tell him he had been called to help God in His work. You remember how he went to play the harp for King Saul and how after that came all the fighting with the Philistines and the slaying of Goliath and all those stormy days so different from what he had known on the peaceful hillsides where the mornings had been still and dewy and sweet, and the nights all starry and hushed, with only the bleating of the sheep and their little lambs and the sound of his own harp for company.

Being made King over a great country and thousands of people must have been a wonderful thing for this shepherd boy, but he determined to be a good King and to listen always for the voice of God as he had done before.

When you come to read stories of all these

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

wonderful men in the Bible itself you will read of many things in their lives that I have not been able to tell you in this book, and some of the things you will like and consider very beautiful and other things you will hardly be able to understand. You will wonder how they could have been listening for the voice of God, but you must always remember that these days were long and long ago, and that all around the men who were trying to be good were men who were not good and who were wicked and idolatrous and that they often got confused and could hardly tell right from wrong, just as we do sometimes, even yet. And you must also remember that all this was many, many years before Jesus Christ came into the world to teach more clearly what God wants us to do.

And so when you come to read the story of King David you will remember all this and that he tried to "walk before God" as the Bible says.

The old Hebrew stories tell us that before Saul had been made king the beautiful Ark that held the Ten Commandments had been stolen by the

David, the Shepherd King

Philistines and carried away, but that after keeping it for awhile they had taken it back to Canaan where a man named Eleazer had taken care of it in his house.

After David came to be King he wanted the Ark brought back to Jerusalem and put in the Tabernacle. So he gathered together all the chosen men of Israel and they went to Judah where the Ark was and set it upon a new cart drawn by oxen. Then David and all the men who were with him went before the Ark and played on instruments,—harps and cymbals and psalteries and timbrels and cornets. On the way something happened which made David afraid the Lord was displeased with them because they were carrying the Ark and so they left it at a house by the wayside. Afterward David went again with his men and got the Ark and took it to Jerusalem and put it in the Tabernacle. David was so glad that the Ark was being brought to Jerusalem that he danced and leaped with all his might and his men played upon trumpets and harps and they sang. And before the Israelites who had helped bring the Ark to

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Jerusalem went back to their homes he gave them, both men and women, bread and meat and wine and he blessed them.

After awhile David began to think that the Ark ought to have a more beautiful Tabernacle built in which to keep it and he talked with his friend Nathan, the prophet, about it. Nathan, in the night, heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him in a dream, telling him that David should have a son who would build the Tabernacle after he, David, was dead. Nathan told David that the Lord had said that he would watch over and care for his son and make him a great man and a great ruler. When Nathan had done telling David what the Lord had said David went into his house and prayed to God, thanking Him for all the wonderful things He had done and for His promise. Afterward a son was surely born to David and they called him Solomon. All his life David remembered the promise of God to Nathan that Solomon should build the beautiful Tabernacle and he gathered together beautiful treasures of gold and silver to be put into the Temple.

David, the Shepherd King

David was called by the Hebrews "The Sweet Psalmist," because he was always singing and playing upon his loved harp. He sang about love and mercy and the tender care of God. He sang about sheep and little lambs and beautiful dewy mornings and cool starry nights and little brooks and still waters, for these were the things he had known most about when he was a shepherd boy and tended the sheep on the hillside, and before he ever dreamed of being a great leader of battles or a King.

And when he was an old, old man he called about him the priests and prophets and told them to call his son, Solomon, and anoint him King of Israel to reign in his stead and they did. And Solomon was made King while David was yet alive.

DAVID AND HIS SON ABSALOM

II Samuel XVIII:1-33

WHILE David was King of Israel there was fighting and bloodshed just as there had been during Saul's reign, for there were always countries and nations warring with one another.

David marshalled all his armies and sent captains over there and then he said to the people, "I will go forth into battle with you." But the people would not let him. "Thou shalt not go forth," they said. "If we flee away they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us; but thou art worth ten thousand of us, and it is better therefore that thou stay in the city and watch over it and guide us from there."

David said, "Very well. What seemest to you best I will do."

David and His Son Absalom

So he stood at the gate of the palace and watched the soldiers march by, and as they went by he said to each captain, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, my son Absalom." And all the people heard the king give charge to the captains over Absalom.

Now Absalom was not a good man and he had been very wicked and unkind to his father David. He had even tried to get the kingdom away from him and David had had to flee for his life from Absalom and Absalom's men.

Nevertheless, when his own troops were marching away he was afraid they would be angry at Absalom for his wickedness to the king, so he told them to "deal gently with him for my sake."

The battle that day was fought in a great and thick forest and a great many lives were lost. Absalom and his men were fighting against King David's men. Absalom came riding through the thick forest on a mule and just as he met some of the king's servants the mule ran into the thick branches of an oak and Absalom was caught by the branches of the oak and hung there. Then

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some of the men who had seen this, enemies of Absalom, ran and told some other men and together they came and ran swords into him and killed him, so angry were they at his wickedness to his father. They took down his body and threw it into a pit in the wood.

During all the time of the battle David sat at the gate of the palace waiting for news, and over the gates on the roof stood the watchman to see if any one came.

In those days the only way there was of sending news was to send a man who could run very swiftly. So when the watchman over the gate saw a man running swiftly he called to David and said, "There is a man running."

"Is he alone?" cried the King. "If he is alone then there is tidings in his mouth."

The watchman called that there was another man coming, running swiftly behind the first runner. Then the first man came swiftly up to the gate and called out to the King, "All is well." And he bowed his head down upon the earth and said, "Blessed be the Lord thy God which hath

David and His Son Absalom

delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.”

But there was one thing more than all others King David wanted to know and he cried out quickly,

“Is the young man Absalom safe?”

The runner replied: “When the captain sent thy servant I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.”

Then the second runner came up and the King told the first man to stand aside while he heard the other’s news.

“Tidings,” cried the second runner, “My lord the King; for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all that rose up against thee.”

But as before there was one thing more than others that a loving, white-haired old father wanted to know. “Is the young man Absalom safe?” he cried.

Then the runner replied solemnly: “May the enemies of my lord the king and all that rise

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against thee and do thee harm, be as that young man is."

Then David knew that Absalom was dead, and even though his son had been wicked and cruel to him, so strong and deep was his father love that he went up into the chamber over the gate and bowed his old white head in his hands and wept, and as he went he cried out:

"O, my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son."



KING SOLOMON, THE WISE

I Kings I:1-52

YOU will remember that King David had another son named Solomon, and when David had died, Solomon was made king of the Israelites.

Solomon took for his wife the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and brought her to his own house in Jerusalem. Then he built a great Tabernacle and great walls about the city of Jerusalem. Solomon loved the Lord and tried to obey His voice as his father, David, had done.

One night God spoke to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon answered: "Thou hast shown unto thy servant, David, my father, great mercy according as he walked before Thee in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with Thee. And Thou

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hast kept for him the great kindness that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne. And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David, my father. And I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or to come in." He said that he had been made ruler over so many people that they could not even be numbered or counted, and he asked God to give him great wisdom, so that he would be better able to teach and lead his people.

His answer pleased the Lord and the Lord told him that because he had not asked riches, nor for long life, nor for greatness, nor for any of the things that a selfish person would have asked for, but just wisdom and understanding to rule his people, the Lord would give him not only these things but honor and riches also. And He told Solomon that if he was a good man and obeyed God as his father, David, had done, he should live to be a very old man.

Solomon reigned as King for many years and was so great in wisdom and understanding and

King Solomon, the Wise

knew so many things that people came from all the world around to get wisdom from him. They never ceased to marvel at the wonderful understanding and sayings of Solomon. And even to-day which is thousands of years since Solomon was king, we go to the story of his life in the Bible for wisdom.

There was not so much fighting with the Philistines during Solomon's reign as there had been during David's, so Solomon had more time for other things. He built the Temple that his father, David, had wanted to build, and for which David had saved so many golden and silver treasures. It was a most wonderful building all built of cedar, which was the most beautiful wood they could get, and this was carved into beautiful flowers and angels and palm trees and then all this was covered with pure gold. The doors and floors and walls were all made of wood and carved with flowers and then covered with gold. They were seven years building it.

Everybody in Israel brought treasures of gold and silver and jewels to help make the wonderful

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Temple and when it was done all the Israelites came to see it and to feast and praise God. They brought the Ark in which were the Ten Commandments and all the jewels and gold and silver and precious treasures that David had saved and put them in the Temple. Then they sang and played upon instruments, harps and cymbals and trumpets. King Solomon stood outside the Temple and made a beautiful prayer to God, thanking Him for all His kindness to them and telling Him that they were glad they could build this Temple for Him. When he had finished he blessed the people and said: "The Lord our God be with us as He was with our fathers. Let Him not leave us or forsake us."

Before the people went away he gave to each one, men and women, meat and bread and wine and they feasted.

King Solomon became, as the Lord had promised him, the wisest man in all the world and also the richest. He had many ships that sailed to other countries and brought back spices

King Solomon, the Wise

and gold and silver and jewels and other treasures. He had great flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and many servants and beautiful houses. All his drinking vessels were of pure gold. Even silver was not thought good enough, for of both gold and silver there were great plenty. The King had at sea a great navy, and once in three years his ships came home bringing rich cargoes of gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks. He had horses brought from Egypt, and chariots. His merchants brought rich cloths and linens, and everyone who came brought presents, vessels of silver and vessels of gold and rich garments and armory, spices, horses and mules until King Solomon was the richest as well as the wisest man in all the world. All this God had given him because he was not selfish, but had asked for that which was worth more than all these.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

1 Kings X

ONCE while Solomon was King over Israel he had a visit from another royal monarch which was a very grand visit indeed.

The Queen of Sheba, a country which was in the southern part of Arabia, heard of the great wisdom and knowledge of King Solomon, so she resolved to go and see him and to ask him all the hard questions she could think of, for she was a very wise woman herself.

The Queen of Sheba ordered a great many camels and servants got ready to bear her. The camels were laden with sweet spices, ivory, ebony and precious stones, and their trappings were of rich blankets in purple and crimson velvet with shiny silver harness. The queen was dressed in richest robes with jewels about her neck and upon

The Queen of Sheba

her arms. She rode upon the biggest and finest camel whose trappings were of velvet and gold and silver and there were men servants and maid servants and camel drivers to take care of her.

A message was sent to tell King Solomon of her coming and when the long train of camels with their tinkling bells and their precious freight began to draw near, King Solomon went down upon the steps of his wonderful temple to meet her. The steps were carpeted with the softest of carpets and a beautiful stool was brought for the Queen of Sheba to step on.

Then King Solomon showed the Queen of Sheba the wonderful house he had built with its hundreds of men servants and maid servants, the ministers who waited upon the king with their rich and beautiful garments and jewels, and he answered all the questions the Queen of Sheba asked.

Then the Queen of Sheba believed all that had been told her of Solomon's wisdom and glory and she said:

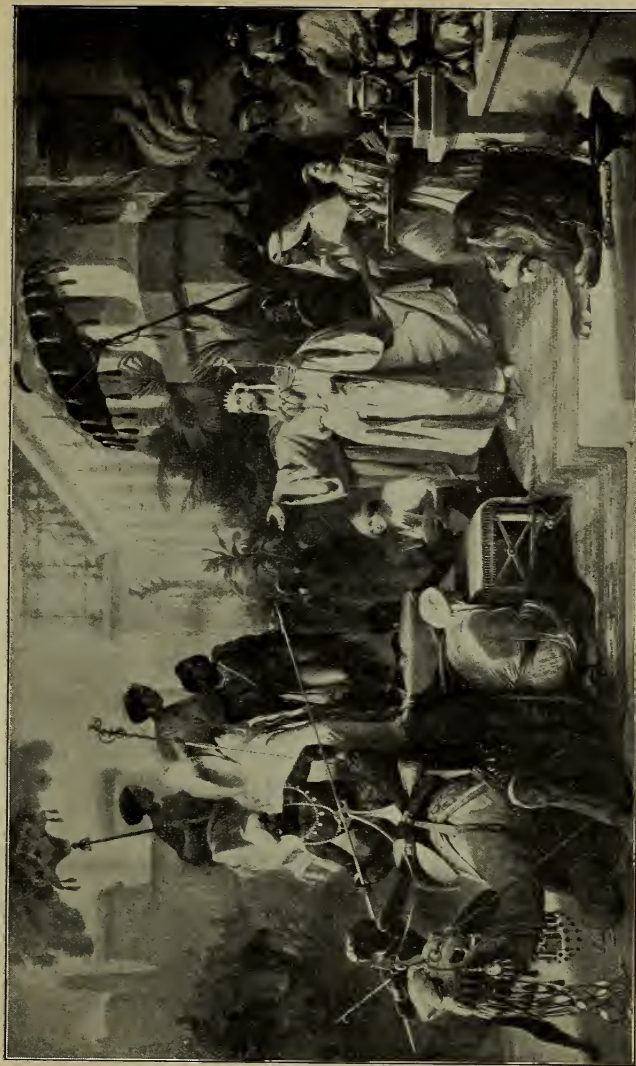
"It was a true report that I heard in mine own

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land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen it. And behold the half was not told me. Thy wisdom and thy prosperity exceeded the fame which I heard. Happy are the men, happy are these, thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel.”

She gave the king beautiful presents of gold and jewels and spices. No one in all the country ever brought to Jerusalem such an abundance of rich spices and gifts as the Queen of Sheba brought to Solomon.

And when the Queen had seen all the splendor of Solomon's house and had learned his wisdom and greatness, she called her servants and they went back to their own country.



THE STORY OF ELIJAH

I Kings XVI; XVIII:41-46; XIX:1-8

KING Solomon reigned king over Israel many, many years and after he died the Land of Canaan was divided into two parts. One was still called Israel and the other was called Judah. These countries had many different kings as the years went by and the people often lost sight of the true God, the God Moses and Noah and Jacob and Abraham had loved and taught their people about. They made images or idols out of stone and wood and ivory and worshipped them and prayed to them, just as the people worshipped the golden calf that time when Moses was up in the mountain listening for the word of God to give him the Ten Commandments.

Now and then there would be amongst these people a prophet, a man who still believed in the

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true God and who would tell the people about Him and how wrong and foolish it was to pray to idols and images.

One of these prophets was named Elijah. He was a good man and loved God very, very much. He tried to teach the people about Him, and he told the heathen King who was ruler over Israel at that time that there should be no rain or dew for three years in all Israel, and that a famine would come upon them, because he and his people were wicked and prayed to heathen gods instead of praying to the true God and loving Him.

God spoke to Elijah, telling him to go to where there was a little brook and stay there where he could get water to drink and He would send ravens every day to feed him all the time he was there, because the people would be angry at him for bringing the famine. Elijah did as God had told him. He went to the little brook and the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening. And he drank water from the brook. Finally, because there was neither rain nor dew the brook dried

The Story of Elijah

up and then God told Elijah to go to the city some distance away where lived a widow woman who would get him food and drink. When Elijah came to the gate of the city the widow woman was gathering sticks. He called to her and said "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink," and as she was going to bring the water he called again and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." She told him that she had no bread in the house and but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a bottle, and that she would make a cake for herself and her son and when they had eaten this she expected they would die for there was nothing more for them to eat. But Elijah told her to go and make the cakes and to bring him one, and that as long as the famine lasted there would always be meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse. And the woman did as he told her and it was as Elijah had said. There was always meal in the barrel and oil in the cruse for all of them.

One time while Elijah was living here with the widow woman during the famine, her little son

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was taken very ill and died. The woman called upon Elijah and asked him if he had been sent to slay her son because of her sins. Elijah was grieved and sorry for her and he told her to give him her son. He took the little boy upstairs to the loft where he slept and laid him upon his own bed. And then he lay down against the child and prayed God not to bring sorrow upon the widow woman who had been so good to him, and God heard the voice of Elijah and the child was restored to life. Elijah took the child back to his mother and said, "Thy son liveth," and the woman said, "Now I know that thou art a man of God and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

When the three years of famine were ended all Israel was suffering very greatly for want of rain. Elijah went to the king and told him that if he and all his people would stop worshipping idols he would pray to God to send rain. And the King promised. Then Elijah took his servant and went up to the top of a mountain and he put his face down between his knees and prayed. Then he told

The Story of Elijah

his servant to look away toward the sea and to tell him if there were any clouds that looked like rain. The servant looked and said, "There is nothing." Elijah bade him look again and again until he had looked seven times and at the seventh time the servant said, "There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand." And very soon the heavens were black with clouds and wind and there was great rain that refreshed all the thirsty land and filled all the brooks and made the people glad. Then people believed that Elijah's God to whom he had prayed and who had sent the blessed rain was the true God and the only God who could answer prayer.

Another time when an enemy had threatened Elijah's life, he went away into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree, for he was discouraged and sad. And he called to God and said, "It is enough now. O, Lord, take away my life and let me die."

But, while he was lying there under the juniper tree, an angel came and touched him and said, "Arise and eat."

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Elijah looked and there was a cake which had been baked on the coals of a fire he had made, and a bottle of water stood near by, and he ate and drank and then lay down again and slept. And the angel came again a second time and gave him bread and meat to eat and water to drink so that he had strength to journey the long distance to the land where he was going.

THE ANGEL THAT FOUGHT AN ARMY

II Kings XIX

IN spite of Elijah's teachings as well as those of all the other prophets and good men, the Israelites were still very wicked and idolatrous and made idols of wood and stone to which they prayed. Even the kings were wicked and prayed to idols instead of to the true God.

There were different kings for all the different countries of Judah and Israel and there was much fighting amongst them.

One time a king who was very rich and powerful, came from a country called Assyria with a great number of soldiers and they conquered the Israelites and took away their treasures and riches and made a great many of the Israelites slaves and took them away to their own land.

Now there was a king of Judah called Hezekiah

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who was a good king and taught his people about the true God. And they destroyed the idols and false gods that the people had been worshipping and prayed to God in heaven.

When the Assyrians had fought against the Israelites and conquered them they turned toward Judah intending to conquer that too. Hezekiah knew what a terrible army the Assyrian army was and he trembled for his people fearing they would be slain and taken captives as the Hebrews had been, so he sent for a prophet called Isaiah and asked him to pray to God to help them. Isaiah spoke comforting words to Hezekiah telling him to trust in God and to pray to Him. Hezekiah did, and this was his prayer: "O Lord, our God, I beseech Thee, save us out of the Assyrians' hand, that all the earth may know that Thou art the Lord our God, even thou alone."

Then, the Bible story tells us, the angel of the Lord went forth in the night into the camps of the Assyrians and smote among the soldiers until great numbers of them were dead, and when word was brought to the King of the Assyrians in the

The Angel That Fought an Army

morning that many of his soldiers were dead and no one knew how they had been slain he was afraid and gathered up the remainder of his soldiers and fled for fear the God of the Hebrews would kill all of his soldiers.

After King Hezekiah died the Judean Kings were all wicked and idolatrous, and finally a great army from another country called Babylon, under a king called Nebuchadnezzar, came and fought against the Judeans and killed and conquered almost all of the Hebrews that were there.

This was a very dreadful battle, for the Babylonians burned up the buildings of Jerusalem and among them the beautiful Tabernacle that King Solomon had built. They carried off all the golden and silver treasures that King David had been so long saving for the Temple and took them to their own country to put in their own Temples where their heathen gods were.

When the Hebrews were forced to leave Palestine which had been their home and the home of their forefathers for so long, and go away to a strange country as captives they were very sad.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

The Hebrews had always loved singing and music and they had made a great many beautiful songs which they loved to sing while they played upon harps and other instruments, but now as they went upon their long, sad journey into the strange land of Babylon they had no heart to sing or to play upon instruments.

Their captors, the Babylonians, wanted to make them sing while they were on the journey, but the Hebrews were too sad and said they could not sing. One of them in telling about it afterward said mournfully, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept; we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows that were in the rivers. For they that carried us away captive required of us a song, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs that you used to sing in your old home.' But how shall we sing in a strange land?" And they prayed God not to forget them in the land to which they were being carried.

THE BURNING FIERY FURNACE

Daniel III:1-30

NEB-U-CHAD-NEZ-ZAR, while he was king of the Jews, made an image of gold and set in up in Babylon. Then he sent for all the princes, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of this image.

And when all these men were gathered together and stood before the image which Neb-u-chad-nez-zar had set up, a herald cried out and said, "To you, O people, nations and languages: At the time when you hear music, the music of the cornet, the flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, Ye shall fall down and worship the golden image which Neb-u-chad-nez-zar the King hath set up. And every man who doth not worship, shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

So the people all stood very silent and still waiting for the sound of music, and when they heard the sound of flute, harp, cornet, and all the other instruments burst forth into music they all fell down upon their knees and faces and worshipped the golden image.

When they had worshipped they rose up. Then there came to Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, the king, some men from Chaldea, and they said, "O King, live forever! Thou, O King, hath made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer shall fall down and worship the golden image. And who so falleth not down and worshippeth shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews who thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, named Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go, and these men, O King, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar was angry and furious and he commanded these men, Shad-rach,

The Burning Fiery Furnace

Me-sach, and A-bed-ne-go to be brought before him. And they were brought.

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar spoke to them and said, "Is it true, O Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go, that ye do not serve my gods nor worship the image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image which I have made—*well*; but if ye worship not, in that same hour ye shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and where is your God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go answered and said to the king, "O Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of thy hands. But if not, be it known to thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar was more angry and furious than ever. He ordered that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was usually heated. He ordered his servants to bind the arms and feet of Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go and to throw them into the midst of the furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, hats and other garments and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. The furnace had been heated so terribly hot that its flames reached out and drew in the bodies of the men who were holding Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go and burned them up, and the three men whom they were casting in fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar who was watching, leaned forward and looked and looked again. Then he drew back and his face grew white with fear. He turned to his counsellors and said: "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" And they answered and said unto the King—"True, O King."

The Burning Fiery Furnace

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar cried out and said, "Lo, I see *four* men walking unhurt in the midst of the fire—and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar went up near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and called, "Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go," he said, "ye servants of the most high God, come forth and come hither." Then Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go came forth out of the midst of the fire. And all the princes, governors, captains and king's counsellors gathered about them and they saw that neither were the bodies of these men nor the clothes upon them scorched. The fire had no power over them, neither was the hair of their heads singed and there was no smell of fire upon them.

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar said, "Blessed be the God of Shad-rach, Me-shach, and A-bed-ne-go who hath sent his angel to take care of his servants who trusted in him so greatly that they were willing to be cast into a burning fiery furnace rather than worship any god save their own God."

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Then Neb-u-chad-nez-zar made a law that every people or nation which should speak any word against the God of Shad-rach, Me-shach and A-bed-ne-go should be cut in pieces and their houses torn down. "Because," he said "there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR

Daniel V:1-31

BEL-SHAZ-ZAR was the son of Neb-u-chad-nez-zar and he was king of the Jews after Neb-u-chad-nez-zar.

One time, the Bible stories say, Bel-shaz-zar made a great feast to a thousand of his lords. There were a great many tables set for the feast, and the tables were laden with many good things to eat and much wine to drink.

Bel-shaz-zar commanded his servants to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father, Neb-u-chad-nez-zar had taken out of Solomon's beautiful temple at Jerusalem when it was destroyed. He wanted all the princes and lords to drink from these beautiful vessels of gold and silver.

So the servants brought these beautiful vessels of gold and silver and all the people drank from them, praising the gods of gold and the gods of

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

silver and of brass, of iron, of wood and of stone, but giving no thought to the true God.

While they were all drinking and eating, singing, laughing and making merry, suddenly there came a great light upon the wall across from where Bel-shaz-zar sat, a solemn, beautiful white light, and in that light Bel-shaz-zar saw a man's hand and it was writing something on the wall.

The king grew pale and frightened and his hands and knees shook with fear. He cried aloud to the people and asked them if they saw it and what it meant. He begged them to bring in all the astrologers and fortune tellers, all the interpreters of dreams. He said: "Whosoever shall read this writing and show me what it means, he shall be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Then came all the king's wise men, but they could not read the writing nor interpret it to the king. And King Bel-shaz-zar was greatly troubled and afraid.

The queen came to the king in the banquet

The Feast of Belshazzar

house and she said, "O King, live forever, let not thy thoughts trouble thee." Then she told him of a man in the kingdom whom his father Neb-u-chad-nez-zar had made master over all the magicians and astrologers. She said this man could interpret any dreams or make clear any doubt or hard sentence, and that his name was Daniel.

Then the king commanded Daniel to be brought and he came. The king told Daniel that he had heard of his wonderful interpretation of dreams and things unknown and he said: "If thou canst read this writing and make known to me the interpretation of it I will clothe thee in scarlet and thou shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck and shalt be third ruler in the kingdom."

Then Daniel answered and told the king he did not want the gifts but that he could intrepret the writing and would. He told King Bel-shaz-zar that God had given his father Neb-u-chad-nez-zar a great kingdom, majesty, glory and honor, so much that all the people had trembled and been afraid of him. But that Neb-u-chad-nez-zar had

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

been hard with his people, cruel and unkind, and had torn down their beautiful temple which Solomon had made to God. And that finally his glory and power had been taken from him and he had had to go out and eat grass and sleep with the oxen of the fields. Of all these things Daniel reminded Bel-shaz-zar and then he told Bel-shaz-zar that he was doing the same thing, being proud and hard in his heart, drinking wine from the golden vessels of the Temple and praising the gods of gold and silver and brass when these very vessels were vessels belonging to the house of God. And he told him that the handwriting on the wall was a warning and this was what it said:

“Mene, Me-ne, Te-ke! Uphar-sin.”

“Me-ne,” said Daniel, “Means, ‘God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it.’”

“Te-ke! means, ‘Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting.’”

“Pe-res, (which is another form of the word ‘Upharsin’”) means, ‘Thy kingdom is divided and given unto the Medes and Persians.’”

The Feast of Belshazzar

This, Daniel told him was the intrepertation of the writing. And Bel-shaz-zar commanded that Daniel should be clothed in scarlet and a chain of gold put about his neck. He also made a proclamation throughout the land that Daniel should be third ruler of the kingdom.

But that very night Bel-shaz-zar was slain, and Darius—one of the Medes, was made ruler of the kingdom.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

Daniel VI: 1-24

AFTER the Hebrews had been in the new land for a long time they ceased to mourn for their old home and became quite well contented with their new home, especially those of them to whom the king was kind. Some of them even forgot their own God of whom their prophets and priests had taught them and worshipped idols and gods as the Babylonians did.

There were a few left among them, however, who always remembered that they were Hebrews and that there was one true living God who would hear and answer prayer. Amongst the few who were faithful to their teachings was a man named Daniel, the same Daniel who interpreted the handwriting on the wall. Daniel was a good man and listened for the voice of God.

Daniel in the Lion's Den

He would not pray to heathen gods and idols, but he was wise and kind and the king of Babylon was good to him and loved him and gave him many favors even more than were given to presidents and princes of the Babylonians themselves. Of course this made the princes and presidents jealous and angry at Daniel and they wanted to harm him. So they put their heads together and made a wicked plan. They made a law that any man who should pray to any other god or man besides the king for thirty days should be thrown into a lions' den. They knew that every day at morning, noon and evening Daniel opened his windows toward Jerusalem where his old home was and prayed to another God, and they intended that he should be killed in this way.

So they went to King Darius with their law and told him that they had decided among themselves that any man who should pray to any other god or man besides the king should be cast into the den of lions, and they asked Darius to sign the decree which would make it a law. And the king signed the decree.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

When Daniel heard that this decree had been made he paid no attention to it but went into his house and opened his windows toward Jerusalem, where the beautiful Temple of God had been, and which, therefore seemed to bring him closer to God, and he prayed to God as he had done every day before. The wicked men who had made the decree came and found him praying and then they went straightway to King Darius and said, "Thou hast signed a decree that any man that prayeth to any god or man within thirty days, save thee, O King, should be cast into the lions' den?" And the king said, "It is true." Then they told him that Daniel, one of the Hebrew captives, was praying to his God three times a day. They told the king also that he must keep his word about casting him into the lions' den, for a king's word may not be broken. All day long the king tried to find some means of delivering Daniel and could not. So the king commanded and they brought Daniel and cast him into the lions' den. The king, who was fond of Daniel and felt sorry for him, said, "Thy God

Daniel in the Lion's Den

whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.”

They brought a great stone and laid it upon the mouth of the lions' den and the king sealed it with his own signet.

Then the king went to his own palace but he could not eat or sleep and he would not let them play upon the musical instruments for him, but spent the whole night long thinking about Daniel and hoping his God would deliver him. Early the next morning he rose and hurried to the den of lions where Daniel was and he cried out to Daniel, “O Daniel, Daniel, is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” And Daniel, standing there among all the fierce lions answered, “O King, live forever! My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me.”

Then King Darius was very glad and commanded that Daniel be taken from the den. He sent for the wicked men who had accused Daniel and had them thrown into the lions' den and the lions ate them up.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Then King Darius wrote to all the people on all the earth a message which declared that Daniel's God was the true God, for He was a true and steadfast God who answers prayers and takes care of his kingdom.



THE STORY OF KING AHASUERUS AND VASHTI

Esther I:1-22

AT one time there reigned a great king, named A-has-u-e-rus. He was ruler over many provinces from India to Ethiopia, and was a very rich and powerful king.

When he had been ruler of this country for three years he gave a feast in the royal palace, and invited all the princes from the various provinces of which he was ruler, the nobles from Persia and Media, and all the stewards, and those that ruled under him.

This great feast lasted for a hundred and eighty days, and on all those days there was banqueting, dining, singing, dancing, and other merry-making. The guests also spent much of their time in wandering over this beautiful castle

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

and examining all the wonderful things that were in it. The rooms were not papered as our rooms are, but were hung with beautiful silks, white, green and blue, and these were fastened with great cords also of silk with huge silken tassels at the ends, to silver rings and marble pillars. The beds were of gold and silver, and the coverlets were of silk; the floors were paved with marble of all colors, red, blue, white and black. Each one had a cup of gold to drink from, and no two cups were alike.

When this feast was over King A-has-u-e-rus gave another feast and invited, besides all the princes who were there, all the people who lived in the palace, and this feast lasted seven days. Again there was much feasting and drinking and merry-making and each one had a golden cup to drink from and no two were alike.

Now the name of the queen of A-has-u-e-rus was Vashti, and Vashti also gave a great feast to all the women in the royal palace.

On the seventh day of the feast, King A-has-u-e-rus sent his chamberlains—the men who

The Story of King Ahasuerus and Vashti

were always near him to serve him—to Vashti and commanded her to come to his feast wearing her royal crown and robes, to show all the princes and nobles what a beautiful queen she was. But Queen Vashti did not fancy coming into this great room where were hundreds of half drunken men just that they might stare at her and make remarks about her beauty. She therefore sent word to King A-has-u-e-rus by his chamberlains that she would not come.

When the Chamberlains returned to the king and told him that Queen Vashti refused to obey him, he was very angry. He turned to those princes who sat next him, which were the princes of Media and Persia, and asked them what they thought he ought to do to punish Queen Vashti for her disobedience. The princes told him that Vashti had done wrong, not only to the king, but to all the princes and nobles of the Empire, because when their ladies heard that the queen dared disobey the King and was not punished for it, all their own wives and the ladies belonging to their households would disobey them also and

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

there would be great trouble throughout the Empire. They told King A-has-u-e-rus therefore, that they thought he ought to send a written decree or law to all the provinces of his empire, and to the Medes and Persians, saying that because of her disobedience, Queen Vashti would be forbidden ever to come to the royal palace again, or ever to wear the royal crown; and then when the wives and ladies belonging to the households of the princes and nobles throughout the kingdom heard what had happened to Queen Vashti, because of her disobedience, they would all obey their husbands and do honor to them.

This pleased the king and he wrote letters to all the provinces of his kingdom and signed them with his ring, telling what the fate of Queen Vashti was for her disobedience. So Vashti came no more to the royal palace nor ever again wore the royal crown upon her head.

THE STORY OF QUEEN ESTHER

Esther II; III; IV

THEN a new queen must be chosen for King A-has-u-e-rus. So word was sent out to all the provinces that all the fair young maidens should come to the king's palace, that he might choose amongst them for a queen.

I wonder if you will remember in one of the stories I have told you about King Neb-u-chad-nez-zar, who carried some people away from Judea and made captives of them in Babylon? Now in Shushan, the place where King A-has-u-e-rus's palace stood, lived a man who was a descendant of these same Jews and his name was Mordecai. With him lived a very fair and beautiful young maiden who was the daughter of Mordecai's uncle and whose father and mother were both dead. Her name was Esther.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

When the king's commandment was heard that all the fair and beautiful young girls should gather together at the palace, Esther also was brought. Each young maiden was sent in to the king to see if he passed favor upon her, and when Esther's turn came, the king loved her above all others and he set the royal crown upon her head and made her his queen, and then he made a great feast for Esther and invited all the people of the palace and gave gifts to them.

You must remember that Mordecai, the guardian of Esther, was a Jew, and that the Jews were hated by all the people of A-has-u-e-rus's household; therefore Mordecai had told Esther that she must not let the King, nor anyone else know that she or her people were Jews.

Now, amongst the king's household, was a man named Haman who was a great favorite of the king, and was set above all the princes and nobles. All the king's servants had to bow down and reverence Haman for this was the king's law; but Mordecai, the Jew, would not bow down or worship Haman, because he hated him. Then, when the king's servants saw that

The Story of Queen Esther

Mordecai would not bow down to Haman, they questioned him and said, "Why transgressest thou the king's commands?" And Mordecai told them he was a Jew and would not reverence Haman. Then Haman determined to kill all the Jews that were in all the kingdom of A-has-u-e-rus, because he hated Mordecai and wanted to kill all his people. So he went to King A-has-u-e-rus and told him that there were certain people throughout all his province who did not keep his comamnds, and whose laws were diverse from the king's laws, and that it was not profitable for the king to keep them. He asked the king to write a decree that they should be destroyed, promising to pay a great sum of money into the king's treasuries if the king would do as he wished. So the king wrote letters to all the provinces and sealed them with his ring, decreeing that all the Jews throughout the kingdom, both young and old, little children and women, should, in one day, the thirteenth day of the month, be killed. And the letters were sent out in great haste by post, by runners, camels and

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

messengers, even to the palace and the place where the palace stood.

Then Haman and the king sat down to drink, but the king did not know that Queen Esther also was a Jew.

When the decree became known there was great weeping and wailing and distress throughout all the kingdom, for there were many Jews.

Mordecai, the Jew, when he heard the decree was greatly grieved and he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry.

The queen's maids came and told Esther that Mordecai was out in front of the palace weeping and wearing sackcloth, and Esther was sorely grieved and sent clothing out to him and told him to take off his sackcloth. But Mordecai would not receive the clothing and kept on weeping and mourning.

Then Esther called one of the king's chamberlains—the one who was appointed to wait on her—and told him to go and find out what the trouble was with the man, Mordecai. The

The Story of Queen Esther

servant went, and Mordecai told him what Haman had done, and gave him a copy of the written decree of the king—saying that on the thirteenth day of the month all the Jews should be destroyed—to show to Esther. And he sent a message to Esther that she should go to the king and tell him she was a Jew and make supplication to him through his love for her, for her people.

The servant went back and told Esther all he had learned and gave her Mordecai's message. Then Esther sent him again to Mordecai and told him to tell Mordecai that everybody, all the king's servants and all the people of his provinces knew that whoever, whether man or woman, went into the king's presence without being called by the king, would be put to death, except that to such a one who should so venture, the king would hold out the golden sceptre and let him live. "But" she said, "I have not been called into the king's court these thirty days and I am afraid to go lest he be angry and kill me."

And the servant told Mordecai what Esther said.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

“You must tell her,” said Mordecai, “that she must not think because she is in the king’s house she will escape any more than any other of the Jews. Tell her that even if it is not found out now that she is a Jew, it will be found out later and she will be killed. And moreover, tell her that it may be God put her in the palace of the king at this time for this purpose—to save her people.”

So when the servant returned and told Esther what Mordecai said she made answer:

“Go and tell Mordecai to gather together all the Jews that are in the city and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink for three days—but pray. I and my handmaidens also will fast and pray, and then I will go into the king’s inner court, which is against the law; and if I perish I perish.”

And Mordecai went and did as Esther bade him.

On the third day of fasting Queen Esther put on her royal robes and her jewels and her crown and went into the king’s house.

The Story of Queen Esther

The king was sitting on his royal throne in the palace and when he saw Queen Esther advancing toward him so stately and beautiful in her royal robes and smiling graciously, he was not angry but pleased; he held out the golden sceptre, and Queen Esther drew near and touched it.

The king said:

“What wilt thou, Queen Esther? What is thy request? It shall be given thee, even to the half of my kingdom?”

And Queen Esther replied:

“If it seem good with the king, let the king and Human come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for them.”

The king sent word to Haman to make haste and obey Queen Esther and both the king and Haman went to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

While they were eating and drinking at the banquet, King A-has-u-e-rus, said again to Queen Esther: “What is thy petition? Whatever it is it shall be granted unto thee, even to the half of my kingdom.”

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

Queen Esther told him that if she had found favor in his eyes she would ask him and Haman to come again to her house to banquet on the morrow, and the king said they would.

When Haman went from the banquet at the king's house he was very much puffed up with pride, but as he went out of the gate he met Mordecai, and Mordecai would not bow before him, nor move out of his way for him and he was very angry.

So then Haman called his wife and all his friends and told them what a very rich and fortunate man he was; how the king had promoted him from one position to another, and how Queen Esther had invited no other man to the banquet with the king except himself.

"But," he said, "in spite of all this I can not be happy so long as I see that Jew, Mordecai, sitting at the king's gate." Then all his friends and his wife told him to have a high gallows built and to tell the king that he wanted Mordecai hanged upon it. And when that was done to go merrily in to the queen's banquet.

The Story of Queen Esther

This pleased Haman mightily and he set men at work to building the gallows on which Mordecai was to be hung.

THE MAN WHOM THE KING HONORED

Esther VI

ON the night of the first banquet in Queen Esther's house King A-has-u-e-rus could not sleep and he commanded the chamberlain to bring in to him the book of chronicles—or record of events—and read to him. In it they read how Mordecai had once saved the king from being slain by two wicked chamberlains who wanted to kill him. The king said, “What honor and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this?”

The chamberlain told him that nothing had been done for Mordecai.

Then the king said, “Who is in the outer court?”

It was morning now and Haman had come early to the Court to ask the king if he might have Mordecai hanged upon the gallows, so the men looking out said, “Haman is in the outer

The Man Whom the King Honored

court." And the king said, "Let him come in."

So Haman came in. And the king said to him: "What should be done to a man whom the king delighteth to honor?"

Now of course Haman immediately thought the king meant him so he told the king exactly what he would like to have done.

"Let the royal apparel be brought," he said, "which the king useth to wear, and the king's own horse, and the royal crown. And let all them be given to one of the princes of the realm who shall array the man whom the king delighteth to honor, and put him on the back of the king's horse, and he shall be proclaimed before him, "This is the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

Then the king said to Haman, "Make haste then and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai, who sitteth at the king's gate; let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken, for it is he whom the king delighteth to honor."

So Haman had to do as the king bade him, and

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

he led Mordecai on horseback in the king's apparel through the streets of the town, crying, "This is the man whom the king delighteth to honor." But when he had done the king's bidding he ran to his house mourning, and while he was telling his wife and friends about it the king's chamberlain came bidding him to make haste and come to Queen Esther's second banquet.

QUEEN ESTHER'S BANQUET

Esther XVIII

SO the king and Haman came again to banquet with Queen Esther. And as on the first day, King A-has-u-e-rus said, "What is thy petition, Queen Esther? Whatever it is it shall be granted to thee, even to the half of my kingdom."

Then the queen turned her beautiful face upon him and clasped her hands and said:

"If I have found favor in thy sight, O King, and if it please the king, let my life be spared at my petition, and my people at my request; for we are sold. I and my people to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish. If we had been sold for bond men and bond women, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage."

The king was very angry and said, "Who is he

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

and where is he that durst presume to do this?"

Then Esther pointed to Haman and said, "Here he is."

King A-has-u-e-rus was terribly angry to think that Haman had so deceived him and he went out into the garden to think what he should do. While he was there he heard of the gallows which Haman had had built for Mordecai to be hanged upon, and he said, "Hang Haman thereon instead."

So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

Then Queen Esther told A-has-u-e-rus that Mordecai was her uncle. A-has-u-e-rus sent for him and he told Mordecai to write letters to all the Jews in all the provinces that their lives would be spared, and that they might all live together happily. And he commanded his scribes to write to the Medes and the Persians reversing the law regarding the killing of the Jews. And he signed the letters with his ring, for when a letter was signed with the king's ring no man could reverse that law.

Queen Esther's Banquet

Then he clothed Mordecai in royal apparel of blue and white, and in garments of purple and fine linen, and with a great crown of gold. And all that were in the city rejoiced and were glad. And the Jews all over the land had joy and gladness, a feast and great happiness.

THE ISRAELITES RETURN TO PALESTINE

YOU will remember how the wicked king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed and burned Jerusalem and the beautiful Temple that Solomon had taken such delight in building, and had carried off all the gold and silver and brass treasures and made the Hebrews slaves? Well, the Hebrews after this lived seventy years in the land of Babylon and then the king decided to send them back to Palestine where they came from.

He let them take back their treasures of gold and silver and brass and gave them other beautiful presents to build a new temple with when they should get back to Jerusalem, and he chose a man amongst them, a prince called Zerubbabel, to lead them. And so the Israelites travelled the long journey again back to Palestine.

The Israelites Return to Palestine

When they came to Jersusalem they set about rebuilding the walls about the city which the army of Nebuchadnezzar had torn down, and they intended when this was done to rebuild the temple.

The Israelites whom Nebuchadnezzar had not taken captives because they were poor and who had been left behind to care for the vineyards, came and offered to help in the building of the new temple, but the Hebrews who had just returned from Babylon refused their aid and wanted to build it all alone. This made the other Israelites angry and they began to fight, so the Hebrews had to fight against them while they were building the temple.

Daniel was one of the Hebrews who had returned from Babylon and he prayed God to forgive them their sins and to help them in the building of the new temple. An angel came to Daniel when he was saying his evening prayers and told him that he was greatly beloved and that his prayer would be answered and that Jerusalem should be rebuilt.

Bible Stories From the Old Testament

After a while more Hebrews were sent back from Babylon and then they all helped toward building the temple, and when the foundation was laid there was great feasting and rejoicing and singing by the builders. They played upon trumpets and cymbals, and they sang and shouted and praised God. But some of the old priests and chiefs who had seen the beautiful old temple that Solomon had built were very sad as they remembered the temple and other days of rejoicing and all the sorrowful things that had happened since, and they wept. So there was both rejoicing and weeping while the new temple was being built, as, indeed, there always is when any great work is being done.

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